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ARBEN PUTO

FROM THE
ANNALS OF
BRITISH
DIPLOMACY

(THE ANTI-ALBANIAN PLANS OF GREAT
BRITAIN DURING THE SECOND WORLD
WAR ACCORDING TO FOREIGN OFFICE
DOCUMENTS OF 1939-1944)

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(THE WITH-ALBANIAN PLANS OF GREAT
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DOCUMENTS OF 1939-1941)

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PREFACE

The great epic of the National Liberation War of our people under the leadership of the Party and Comrade Enver Hoxha is an inexhaustible source of inspiration and a constant theme in the most diverse fields and genres of creative works and studies in our country. Despite the great amount of work that has been done, it always remains an endless field, open to all, awaiting further elaboration with persistent and enthusiastic work to bring out all the tremendous values which it contains and which are an extraordinary enrichment of our history.

Undoubtedly the angle from which this book presents matters to the reader is a peculiar one. However it is not without interest, because it permits us to look «over the fence» into the camp of the opponents, our enemies, and then the ugly picture of incredible plans and intrigues which have been concocted to the detriment of Albania by those who posed as «allies», is laid bare before our eyes.

Here lies the importance of the documents of the British Foreign Office in connection with Albania during the Second World War, documents that comprise the subject matter of this small volume which is presented to the reader. Naturally, we are not introduced for the first time to the secret or declared enemies of our Homeland, through these documents; we have known them for a long time. However the documents do serve one purpose: they are another eloquent testimony, although indirect, to the heroism and sagacity of our people, to the majesty of the National Liberation War that was crowned with final victory despite all the many obstacles that it encountered.

This is the purpose for which the author undertook his analysis of the British documents in connection with Albania: to expose the anti-Albanian policy, to lay bare the hypocrisy of the imperialist «allies» and to do this «out of their own mouths», through the words of functionaries of the Foreign Office and top government officials.

The material presented here has been published previously in a different form. The reference is to a series of articles that were published in the periodical «Nëntori», immediately after the conclusion of the research in the archives of London a little more than three years ago (see periodical «Nëntori» No. 12 of 1972, and Nos. 1, 2, 3 of 1973). The response which these articles aroused among the readers was an incentive for the author to take up the work once again and to prepare this special publication which, of course, is directed to a wider circle of our readers. The present publication is based on the articles

referred to. However, the author took the opportunity to go once again over all the documents for the period 1939-1944 that are available to us at present, and from this a number of facts have been stated more precisely and completely, thus enriching and improving the previous publication.

Here also, as previously, a sort of journalistic style has been deliberately maintained, and this is not in the least artificial, but is suggested by the very content of the material that is provided for us by a diplomacy the duplicity of which is proverbial and recognized by all. However it must be emphasized that, regardless of the forms and tendencies of the presentation, the facts are based entirely on authentic original documents. That is why it was considered proper in this publication to provide the appropriate «scientific apparatus», by quoting all the references to the original sources.

April 1976

INTRODUCTION

THE CENTRAL ARCHIVES OF BRITAIN

In the part of the capital of England that is considered even today as the real heart of old London — The City — there is a smallish, narrow, quiet street, that is largely by-passed by the bustle of modern traffic, called Chancery Lane. On this street stands the main building of one of the less publicized, although we would say no less important, institutions in the bureaucratic apparatus of Britain — the Public Record Office. This is the State Archives. Undoubtedly, it is one of the oldest and richest in the world. Suffice it to mention that the most ancient official documents kept there date from the period of the Norman Conquest of England, about nine centuries ago. However only since the middle of the last century (more precisely, since the year 1838) has the London Archives assumed the appearance that it has today, as a separate, centralized entity, that gathers the documentary materials of the principal links of the state mechanism of

Great Britain. In our century, and especially since the First World War, the fund of material has increased so rapidly that today the archives are divided into many different branches and points of deposit centred not only inside London but also in the surrounding districts, and even in other cities such as Oxford, Cambridge and Canterbury.

Apparently the leading circles in Britain have always ranked these archives among the most precious assets of the country. Since the early periods of the British state, in the time of the Norman kings, the documents of the Royal Court (*Curia Regis*, as it was then called in Latin)¹, were considered a part of the «king's treasure» and consequently they followed the sovereign from palace to palace whenever he decided to change his residence. In time, naturally, concern for the accumulated documents increased, along with their value, which increased tremendously. Great danger threatened the British Archives in 1940 at the time of the heavy bombing of London by the German airforce. On that occasion a very complicated operation was undertaken and carried through to ensure the preservation of most of the materials of the archives in safe places in all provinces. This was how the British archives came through the Second World War almost undamaged.²

It can be readily understood that, due to the

¹ Up to the end of the 15th century, the overwhelming majority of the documents were written in Latin.

² More detailed data on the beginnings, the history and the contents of the British archives are found in the «General Introduction to the Records», a publication of the Public Record Office (PRO).

special role that Britain has had in world politics (a role which it retained through to the end of the last war), the importance of the British archives goes beyond the borders of that country. Their value for the history of other countries, too, is evident. This is true also of Albania, both during the long period of Turkish rule, and when it emerged as a separate state.

Of course it is wrong to think that the whole historical truth has been reflected in foreign archives in general, and in the British ones, in particular. Without doubt, archival sources are the raw material of historical research. However it is equally clear, also, that without a critical view of them, one can easily fall into the trap of one-sided assessments and flagrant distortions, in which the narrow political interests of this or that particular power frequently find expression.

In the past our scholars have had an idea, in some cases complete and in others approximate, on the materials that have to do with our history in the archives of some large states such as France, Austro-Hungary, Italy, Turkey, Russia and some smaller states where, from time to time, they have carried out some research. However, until a few years ago we had no knowledge at all about the «Albanian funds» of the British archives. The reasons are known. The British government broke off all relations with our country in 1946, when it withdrew its mission from Tirana and «recalled» the minister who was to have headed the first British legation in postwar Albania, but who had still not reached our country. All this was done as measures of reprisal,

because of the stand of our government against the political pressures and blackmail which were intended to bring it to its knees. Since that time and during all that period known as «the cold war», it was unthinkable for anyone from «communist Albania» to enter England. However our century is the century of radical changes: A time has come when «the small» can do without the recognition of «the mighty.» People's Albania, in particular, proceeded on its own course even though it challenged a power that had pretensions «to make the law» in the international arena. Certain conclusions were imposed by the very logic of things even on «the most powerful» of this world. As time passed it was seen that «boycott» and «isolation» could not turn our people from the road they have taken. Thus, in summer of 1972, a visa was granted for a team of two persons from our University to carry out research on the archives in London for a period of two months.

The Public Records Office is organized in general on the basis of certain rules that are in force in any kind of library. Up till 1962 a kind of fee had to be paid for the right to use the materials in the archives. Now, in principle, scientific workers of different countries are permitted access, provided they present a verification from their respective scientific institutions. Our team was equipped with official recommendations from the University of Tirana; on this basis permanent entry cards were issued to us and it must be said that during our research work we encountered no difficulties. We were also given the possibility to take a considerable number of photocopies of the documents that seemed of

greatest interest to us, of course on payment of the appropriate fee.

Another important rule in the central archives of Britain is the «30-years rule». This means that the documents are made available to readers after 30 years have passed from the time of the events to which they refer. From this aspect the British archives are distinguished from the archives of the big states on the continent where the materials are open only after 50 years. Up till a few years ago, the British Government also imposed a 50-years time limit on state secret. Only fairly recently was this reduced to 30 years. Could this have been done for «prestige,» for the purpose of displaying the strength and solidity of «liberal traditions» in the state life of Great Britain? Perhaps, but we think that utilitarian considerations do not come last in line here. The ruling circles in Britain are neglecting nothing, even the archives, to stimulate tourism. Although it might appear somewhat astonishing, it's a fact that in this country, which has been called «the homeland of modern industry», tourism has assumed tremendous importance today as a means which might help to cure the chronic deficit of the balance of payments, which is becoming ever more serious.

Nevertheless, it must not be denied that the pressure of scientific and progressive circles also played a definite role in this direction. Thus, the echo of the persistent requests of historians was heard in the House of Commons and, in 1971, the government was forced to make a special statement in which it pledged to open the documents of the

Second World War without waiting for the completion of the 30-years time limit. It came about by chance that our team should arrive in London only two months after this decision came into force. The archival materials up to the end of 1944 were available to the readers. Several years have now passed, and on the basis of the 30-years rule, the documents of the years 1945, 46, 47 and 48 have become available, while those of 1949 should become available this year.

TRACKING DOWN DOCUMENTS ABOUT ALBANIA

Initially, the aim of our research program was to accomplish a general examination of the British archival and bibliographic sources, in order to shed some light on the Albanian materials of earlier historical periods, since this work was being done for the first time.

Naturally, confronted with the fact that the unpublished documents of such an interesting period as the Second World War had become available, we deemed it necessary to concentrate our attention on the materials of the British Foreign Office, that have to do with the Albanian problem during this period. Because, even though the London archives are centralized¹ and hold the materials of different minis-

¹ PRO is a centralized archives. But even this is relative. For example, no one can say where the documents of the Intelligence Service and similar institutions can be found. If you ask for such materials at the London archives, you may get only a shrug of the shoulders accompanied by a smile «in reply» to such profound «naivety.»

tries, again the documents of the Foreign Office make up the bulk of them there and, indeed, that part which no doubt attracts the overwhelming majority of readers, wherever they come from.

At the end of our search, we were able to arrive at this picture of the situation of the Foreign Office materials in connection with Albania of the years 1939-1944.

First, from the point of view of quantity, we have here 80 volumes or files of documents which have to do solely with the «Albanian problem». According to the years we have this distribution of volumes or files: 8 for the year 1939, 3 for 1940, 11 for 1941, 12 for 1942, 16 for 1943 and 30 for 1944. It is not out of place to mention this distribution, because, even from the increase of the material from one year to the next, one can follow the considerable increase in the «interest» of British diplomacy in Albania the more the end of the Second World War approaches.¹

¹ A good part of these documents (nearly 30-40 per cent) exist in photocopies deposited in the archives of the Institute of History at the Academy of Sciences. In order to enable the students to form a more complete idea of them, a list of photocopies, divided as to year and file number, just as they figure in the official catalogues of the PRO, is given. The photocopies are taken from the fund of the Foreign Office bearing the classification number 371. The general reference is PRO (Public Record Office) FO/371. Albania.

For 1939 photocopies of files No. 23710, 23711, 23712, 23713, 23714 (mainly dealing with the occupation of Albania by fascist Italy and the stand of Britain), were taken. For 1940 — files Nos. 14866, 24867, 24868 (with reference to the si-

In regard to the content of these materials, we can get a brief preliminary idea if we keep in mind that they reflect the whole British policy in Albania at this period. Included here is the activity carried out within the country — through the missions of the British officers — as well as the treatment of the Albanian question at the top levels of the Foreign Office and the British Government. Also included are the exchanges with the governments «most interested» in this problem. Neither Zog nor the Albanian emigrants of all hues, inside and out-

tuation in post-occupation Albania, the beginnings of the Italian-Greek war and Zog's going to Britain). For 1941 — files No. 29709, 29711, 29712, 29714, 29715, 29718 (bearing on the backstage deals with the Greek Government and the «plans» with Zog and the reactionary Albanian emigrants). For 1942 — files No. 33107, 33108, 33109, 33110, 33111, 33112, 33113 (file No. 33115 was closed until opened in 2018), 33118 (dealing mainly with the question of the December 1942 Declaration on the reaffirmation of the independence of Albania). For 1943 — files No. 37135, 37136, 37137, 37138, 37139, 37141, 37144, 37145, 37147, 37150 (three files were missing because they «are kept in the Foreign Office»; most of the photocopies pertaining to this year are reports on the National Liberation War, as well as the traitorous organizations, sent by the English officers in Albania. Another subject is related to the attempts for the creation of the «Albanian Government in exile»). For 1944 — files No. 43549, 43550, 43551, 43552, 43553, 43554, 43555, 43556, 43558, 43559, 43560, 43561, 43562, 43563, 43564, 43565, 43566, 43567, 43568, 43569, 43571, 43572, 43573, 43574, 43575 (no doubt this is the most interesting part of the documents of the Foreign Office, where the history of the desperate efforts to «revive» the Albanian reaction and their final defeat, is told; whereas the magnificent victory of the National Liberation War of the Albanian people emerges only indirectly).

side the borders of Britain, are left out. It can be said without exaggeration that the main elements of the entire diplomatic background of the «Albanian question» in the years 1939-1944, up to the liberation of Albania, emerge from these documents.

In connection with this, it is important to mention that during the Second World War London was for a long time the main centre of the diplomatic game on a world scale. As soon as the immediate danger of the German invasion in the second half of 1940 had been overcome, and particularly from 1941 on, the ruling circles in Britain were supremely confident not only that the British Empire would emerge from the war unweakened, but also that it would have the final say when it came to determining the fate of peoples and nations. Of the other powers of the anti-fascist coalition, the United States had just emerged from its traditional «isolationism» and the Foreign Office was convinced that the US partner needed someone to hold it by the hand in order to guide it through the labyrinth of international politics, in which it was coming out as an inexperienced beginner. For its part, the Soviet Union was engaged in a life or death war with Hitlerite Germany and the predominant opinion was that it had neither the time nor the possibility to think about the fate of others when the danger was hanging over its own head.

Besides this, it is known that during the Second World War London had given asylum to so many «governments in exile» that had fled their countries, leaving their peoples alone to face the nazi-fascist occupiers. Monarchs and rulers who had lost thrones

and government seats, but who had not abandoned their hopes of returning to the head of affairs, when better times came, were gathered there. In these circumstances, British diplomacy felt that it had a free hand to draw up plans and projects, which, according to its deep convictions, would determine the appearance of Europe and the world after the war, just as had occurred previously.

Many countries of the continent and the entire world were entangled in the threads of this diplomacy, but, as in the past, once again the most unbelievable plans were drawn up in connection with the fate of Albania. These are reflected very clearly in the documents of the British Foreign Office.

We must not fail to point out that among these documents some were not available to us. The answer was that they were to remain closed until the year 2018. The reference here is to certain individual documents which are missing from their respective files, as well as to some complete files that are not available to the reader at all. Thus the «30-years rule» is relative. It can easily be guessed that these documents are among the ones which are crucial to British policy and particularly compromising. Of course the lack of them here and there breaks the thread that links many facts and events, as we shall see. Nevertheless the materials, which we were able to see, are sufficient to piece together that diplomatic background of the Albanian question during the Second World War, which will serve us to complete some aspect of the history of the National Liberation Movement of our people.

Although the importance of these documents

cannot be denied, it should not be thought that they bring us sensational revelations. The main outlines of the problems of the foreign policy of the National Liberation Movement have been dealt with correctly in our historiography. The value of these documents rests on the fact, first, that they give us a more fully documented basis and, second, that in throwing a new light they reveal facts and events that reinforce the convictions we have had previously about such problems.

Of course in a publication like this, which is little more than a pamphlet, it is not the place to make a detailed analysis of these materials, taking the documents one by one in turn. Naturally there is material here for more: perhaps a series of scientific articles would be necessary or a special study which would treat this theme more fully.

The task is more limited in our case. It goes without saying that the problems that emerge from the examination of the British documents, from the very period to which they belong, arouse interest and curiosity in the broadest circles of our readers. That is why the purpose of this book is to give a summarized view of the documents of the Foreign Office in connection with Albania during the Second World War, in a form comprehensible not only to specialists but also to the broad masses.

The exposé has been divided into two large groups of problems which comprise its two main parts. In the first part the problems that concern Albania are subjected to examination in the sphere of diplomacy, outside the borders of the country and without any direct contact with its internal situation.

In the second part the British policy revolves mainly around the activity of its missions that have been sent to Albania, from which the problems facing British diplomacy are suggested. This division could be made more precise by taking for a basis this chronological criterion: while the first runs from 1939 to the beginning of 1943, the second part begins precisely with the arrival of the first British officers in the south of the country (spring of 1943) and goes through to November 1944, on the eve of the liberation of Albania.

PART I

On Stage and behind the Scenes

...the publisher would not be complete if we were to limit ourselves to the documents that have been brought to light. The series in question (especially volume V) goes no further than the end of April. Besides this, the selection of documents for publication has not been done without criticism or protest. Thus, if the unpublished documents are not considered, it is difficult to investigate all the developments that the April 17th aggression had

THE APRIL 7th AGGRESSION AND BRITAIN

Without doubt, the event that predominates in the documents of the year 1939 is the occupation of Albania by fascist Italy in April of that year. The truth is that a number of the documents that refer to this event have long been known. They have found their place in the series «Documents on British Foreign Policy (1919-1939)», which is an official British publication. In general, little attention is paid to Albania (as with all small countries) in this published series of British documents. (We noticed, for instance, that much more of the Foreign Office materials in the period between the two wars is unpublished.) But for the year 1939 it is different: now we are in a period of crisis, the Albanian problem takes on acute «dramatic» forms and cannot but have wide international repercussions. That is why the publisher has given more space to events in Albania and their reflection on a European scale.

However the picture would not be complete if we were to limit ourselves to the documents that have been brought to light. First, the series in question (especially volume V) goes no further than the end of April. Besides this, the selection of documents for publication has not been done without criterion or purpose. Thus, if the unpublished documents are not considered, it is difficult to investigate all the developments that the April 7th aggression had in the diplomatic plane.

The problem that must be raised here in a special way is this: What stand did Britain, which was one of the main protagonists of European policy, take in this case? This stand was expressed very clearly in the well-known declaration that the then British Prime Minister Chamberlain made in the House of Commons, precisely on the eve of the invasion, the 6th of April: «Great Britain,» he said then, «had no direct interest in Albania.»¹ From the unpublished documents we learn that, the following day, Mussolini sent Chamberlain a special message in which, after expressing his satisfaction over the declaration, he gave assurances that he would do everything in his power to ensure «that the solution of the Italo-Albanian question will take place in such a form as not to provoke a crisis in Anglo-Italian relations or the international situation in general.»²

¹ A copy of the declaration is found in PRO-FO/371. «Albania 1939». File No. 23712.

² Mussolini's message sent to Chamberlain dated 7.IV.1939, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23714.

The tendency of the British Government to close the question quickly emerges clearly from all the data. However it did not find it easy to shrug off its responsibility in the eyes of public opinion, within the country or on an international level. It must be remembered that one year earlier, in April 1938, Britain had concluded an agreement with Italy on the basis of which both parties promised to respect the status quo in the Mediterranean basin. How could the Italian action in Albania be reconciled with this agreement which the government in London had presented as a diplomatic success in its efforts to separate fascist Italy from the «company» of Hitlerite Germany?

This was precisely the reason that impelled the British Government to hold a special meeting one day after the aggression, on April 8th. The meeting was held in the absence of Chamberlain, the Prime Minister, and naturally this could have no other meaning except that the British Government had no intention of undertaking any unnecessary commitments. Nevertheless at this meeting the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, delivered a special report on the events in Albania. Contrary to what had been said publicly, he stated there that the Italian action was unquestionably a violation of the provisions of Anglo-Italian agreement of the year 1938. Considering the problem especially from the angle of the overall international situation, he said that this was indubitably another proof of the aggressiveness of the fascist powers. However when the time came to define the stand that Great Britain had to take in this concrete instance, he showed himself once again

to be «a strategist of the appeasement policy». He said that it was not necessary to dramatize the situation beyond measure, that Albania should not become a *casus belli*, a cause for the war to break out in Europe, because any step that might lead to further tension in the international arena must be avoided.¹

Indeed Halifax tried to ease «his own conscience» somewhat, rather than to convince the others, by adding that, after all, in judging the situation the «special position of Italy in Albania» must not be overlooked, a position which had been recognized immediately after the First World War in the declaration of the great powers in November 1921. What was this declaration?

This declaration was the document that was approved by the new conference of ambassadors at the conclusion of the discussion of the «Albanian problem» after the war, a document in which the independence of Albania and its borders on the basis of the decisions of 1912-1913 were reaffirmed. However the declaration recognized Italy's «special interests in Albania», while also attributing to it the right of «precedence» in its «protection». With this, a kind of Italian protectorate was established over Albania, a thing which was completely contrary to the statute of the League of Nations which Albania had joined a year earlier (December 1920), as

¹ Minutes of the special meeting of the British Government dated 8.IV.1939 on the stand of Great Britain towards the Italian «action» in Albania, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23712.

an independent and sovereign state. Now, after so many years, Halifax was trying to revive this declaration, and on his lips this sounded like an attempt to justify the Italian policy in Albania, by bringing up as an argument a diplomatic instrument that had aroused great discussion and violent polemics at that time.¹

From the minutes of the meeting of the British cabinet on April 8th, it turns out that all the other members associated themselves with the report of the Foreign Secretary. It was also decided there to take certain measures, which are clear evidence of the weak-kneed, half-conciliatory and irresolute stand of the «western democracies» in the face of the fascist aggression, which was already recognized by all.

The main conclusion was that Albania had to be sacrificed «for the sake of peace in Europe». With the approval of Attlee, himself, it was decided to postpone the meeting of the British Parliament that Attlee had demanded in the name of the Labour opposition «at the earliest possible date, until the situation had clarified itself». In the final analysis, this meeting (which was held on April 13th), could not result in anything surprising or undesirable to the Chamberlain Government, because in the meeting he had with Halifax on the afternoon of that same day (April 8th), Attlee agreed with the con-

¹ For more about this see A. Puto, «The Status of Albania in the League of Nations and the Ambassadors' Conference», in the years 1920-1921. «Historical Studies», 1965, No. 3.

clusion of the cabinet that Albania could not be the cause for a general war in Europe.¹

However there was the other side of the coin. Another worry of the British Government was to avoid giving the public the impression that «it approved the aggression». It had to «dissociate» itself somewhat from the Italian act, if it were not going to decide to condemn it openly and publicly. At the meeting on April 8, there was talk of sending a note of protest to Rome. However that idea was soon rejected as «out of proportion» with what Great Britain wanted to achieve at that moment. There was also talk of withdrawing the British ambassador from Rome. However, this too, was rejected because «it was asier to withdraw an ambassador than to secure his return once he had been withdrawn».²

As a step that had to express its «disapproval» the British Government decided to recall some warships of its Mediterranean fleet — which during those days were making friendly visits to Italian ports — to their base in Malta. However the discussion that was conducted about the explanation to be given to the fascist Italian Government about the withdrawal of the warships was also significant. The wording of the text of the statement was left to the Foreign Office and the Admiralty, which had to weigh every word and measure every phrase. The meeting suggested as a main reason «the situation created in the Mediterranean», as well as the desire

to prevent «the possibility that embarrassing incidents might arise».¹ Naturally from such wording, which kept well clear of the problem, Mussolini gathered that Great Britain did not intend any counter-action other than in words.

In fact, London was indicating that it was ready to forgive Rome for what it had done in Albania. Counteraction was considered, but as always in the long term, for «the next time». To this end, at the April 8 meeting, the British Government decided to carry out a diplomatic action..., in order to further strengthen relations with Greece and Turkey.² Willy-nilly Chamberlain was obliged to touch upon this problem also in Parliament on April 13. His statement on that occasion was a model of ambiguity, at which he was recognized as a past «master». First, he acknowledged that «it was difficult to reconcile what had happened in Albania with safeguarding national sovereignty», as had been envisaged in the Anglo-Italian agreement a year earlier. However, should the British Government have denounced this agreement, as was heard in some quarters? «I do not take that view myself», said the prime minister and went on to explain: «Nobody with any sense of responsibility can in these days lightly do anything which would lead to an increase in international tension.» He ended with a prayer, all humility, like the faithful in church that «because of the uneasiness that now prevails», at least it should be hoped «to see

¹ Notes of Halifax on the meeting with Attlee on April 8, 1939, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23713.

² Minutes to the meeting of April 8, 1939.

¹ Minutes to the meeting of April 8, 1939.

² Minutes to the meeting of April 8, 1939.

the fulfilment of the remaining provisions of the Agreement».¹

At times one cannot but be amazed at the things that have happened in the chancelleries of great diplomacy, however much one knows the reputation they have had and still have of not being in the least concerned about the norms of morality and being capable of making mind-stumming twists. Thus, no later than April 17, one of the top functionaries of the Foreign Office, Sir A. Noble, noted in a report that the Southern Department — the section covering the affairs of South-east Europe — had begun to study «the question of our recognition (i.e., of the British Government) of Italy's annexation of Albania».²

The question had been raised by the British minister in Tirana A. Ryan, who, by the middle of April, was asking the centre what relations must be maintained with the «new regime» in Albania. In this case it was decided to act as in the case of the occupation of Abyssinia, also by Italy, in 1936. Ryan received instructions that for the time being he should enter into certain limited relations which, in diplomatic parlance, are termed *de facto* relations.³ The complete recognition of the «new situation in

1 Attached to the copy of the Prime Minister Chamberlain's statement made on April 13, 1939 is a question asked on this subject in the House of Commons on June 12, 1939, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23715.

2 Report of A. N. Noble, reporter for Southern Department dated 7.IV.1939, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23713.

3 Tel. of Foreign Office sent to A. Ryan in Durrës dated 17.IV.1939 Ibid.

Albania» was accomplished later, on October 31 of that year, with a declaration of the government in Parliament. After the war broke out with Germany, among various measures to urge Italy to stay out of the conflict, the British Government decided to withdraw its legation from Albania and to replace it with a consulate general, in this way considering the country as a part of the kingdom of Italy. Graf-tey-Smith was sent as Consul General of Britain in Durrës, and he remained there until Italy entered the war.

To conclude this paragraph, we believe that the comment made by the same top functionary of the Foreign Office, Noble, about the end of April, brings out very clearly the essence of the British Government's stand at the time of the events which led to the liquidation of Albania's independence in April 1939.

«I think,» wrote Noble, «that the Italians could have made out good case for levering King Zog off the throne and replacing him by someone more amenable (sic!) to persuasion, after all they had predominant interests in Albania and were contributing largely to the country's maintenance... If they had put someone else in his place, if they had even stationed garrisons in Albania... there would have been no international complications and yet the Italians would be precisely in the same position as they are now; ...and they would not have forced us into a guarantee of Greece and Rumania...»¹

1 Report of A. N. Noble dated 20.IV.1939, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23713.

In support of his argument, Noble makes a comparison with the earlier events of Abyssinia, which is quite characteristic of the mentality of British diplomats of this period. He again reproaches fascist Italy, not for the act of aggression against Abyssinia in itself, but for the manner in which it handled the whole affair: first, it should have denounced Abyssinia in the League of Nations for its inability to stop «slavery within its territory» and the «activities of the border bandits»..., thus not only would it have avoided the trouble it had with the so-called economic sanctions in the League of Nations, but it could even have hoped for the direct support of Britain and France. Whereas «in each case,» added Noble, «Signor Mussolini has chosen methods which have profoundly shocked the Christian conscience.»¹

¹ Report of A. N. Noble dated 20.IV.1939, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23713.

ASYLUM FOR ZOG IN BRITAIN AND HIS RELATIONS WITH THAT COUNTRY

Examining the British documents, one cannot fail to notice that the diplomats of the Foreign Office did not always take Zog and his court seriously. The British minister in Tirana A. Ryan, in particular, seized upon some of the more ludicrous aspects of the «clown of progress» and his ignorant suite, which he then reported to his ministry.

Especially worthy of mention is one of his reports at the end of December 1938,¹ in which he describes with entertaining nuances an abortive excursion of Zog and Geraldine on the Adriatic in

¹ Minister A. Ryan's report from Durrës dated 19.XII.1938, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23710. Here is the passage that attracted most attention in this report: «As you are aware, the Italian Government recently presented King Zog with a yacht. On the afternoon of December 10th this vessel put to sea just before sunset, after taking on board His Majesty and the Queen, together with high personages, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and a large quan-

the yacht that Mussolini had given to them as a wedding present. The report had found an enthusiastic approval in the Foreign Office and the Southern Department (that had Albania under its jurisdiction) had sent Ryan an official «pat on the back» for these «few rays of sunshine» that broke through «the sombre and gloomy atmosphere of the daily bureaucracy».¹

There is no disputing that the British know how to use and appreciate humour. However we cannot

tity of luggage. The arrangement had been made with so much secrecy that the Perfect of Durazzo had not been informed by his own superior authorities of the intended departure of his sovereign, nor was there any guard of honour; but the privileged few who were forewarned included my Italian colleague and other Italians.

«I have reason to believe that the destination of the royal couple was Venice or Abbazia. The yacht, however, ran into weather so indement that all the principal personages on board, with the exception, it is said, of the Minister of Foreign Affairs (M. Libohova), were overcome by nausea. This so greatly affected Their Majesties and especially the Queen, who is an expectant mother, that it was decided to abandon the voyage and the yacht returned to Durazzo towards midnight. Consideration was given to the idea of a fresh start for Italy by the steamer for Bari next morning, but this also was abandoned and Their Majesties went back to Tirana in a hired car on the forenoon of December 11th.

«According to one probably well-informed source, the trip to Italy had been in contemplation for some weeks but had been delayed because the Queen preferred to dispense with the company of her sister-in-law, the Princess Sanija, whose departure for Paris was therefore awaited before the final plans were made.»

¹ Note of A. N. Noble dated 6.I.1939, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23710.

say that they laughed much in the Foreign Office at the time when Zog asked for permanent asylum in Great Britain. It is known that, in his precipitous flight, Zog passed through Greece amidst the intense anxiety of the Greek authorities lest this might arouse the anger of Rome. This obliged him to press on, as quickly as possible, to Turkey, where he stayed somewhat longer.

Through his «legation» in Ankara, in May he sent the British Government his request to settle in London, together with his family and the circle that accompanied him.¹ Naturally the desire of the exile king to go to the British capital was not without reason: first, the king was going to the king, second, better close to this centre of big politics than cowering, in some remote corner, out of the way.

In London his request caused considerable concern. Who Zog was and what he represented was forgotten, any sense of humour was put aside and the matter was treated very seriously in the highest government spheres. The Foreign Office, the Home Office and Buckingham Palace, that is, the royal palace, were involved in it. A thick file of papers shows that the pluses and minuses were weighed up until the final decision was reached to accept Zog in England.²

The first problem that arose was the eventual

¹ Report of A. Noble dated 24.V.1939, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23710.

² PRO-FO/371. File No. 23710. See especially summarised report of A. Noble dated 24.V.1939. Ibid.

reaction of fascist Italy. To forestall this, instructions were given to the British ambassador in Rome «to inform the Italians of what we are doing», in confidence, emphasizing that London «found it impossible to completely refuse» the appeal of an «ex-king», but that permission would be granted him and his party only in one condition that «he and his following must scrupulously refrain from all political activity» in the territory of Great Britain.¹ When he was informed of this condition, Zog himself replied from Turkey that he had no intention at all of abusing English hospitality.²

The second problem, no less important, was how secure was Zog financially, all the more since he had 32 persons with him. Someone had expressed the fear that the British Treasury might suffer as with the emperor of Abyssinia, Haile Selassie, who had been «poorer» that was thought.³ In this case, however, information was gathered and the facts were more comforting: Zog had considerable deposits in American and British banks. Then... in fleeing from Albania he had «arranged» to take with him seven cases full of gold.⁴ All this permitted one to think that Zog would be self-sufficient. Furthermore, his asylum could turn out a profitable operation for the British finances.

1 Tel. to Rome dated 12.VI.1939, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23710.

2 Tel. of the British ambassador from Ankara dated 26.VI.1939, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23710.

3 Report above of A. N. Noble dated 24.V.1939.

4 Note of A. N. Noble dated 23.VI.1939, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23710.

In a final note, in May, one can read this reasoning, too, in favour of accepting Zog's appeal, that perhaps is worth mentioning: «King Zog was an unsatisfied King of Albania and he ran away when the crisis came, but the circumstances of the Italian attack and also the appeal to the emotions made by his attractive wife who has just given birth to a son will ensure him much popular sympathy. ...if we refused, we shall lay ourselves open to violent attack...»¹

Good or bad, these were the immediate reasons that impelled the British to receive Zog in their country. There is no doubt that there was also another, more «far-sighted» reason: let him enter the arsenal of British diplomacy and let him be kept there in reserve for any eventuality that may present itself in the political combinations of the future in connection with Albania.

Although Zog received word of acceptance of his request for asylum from the British Embassy in Ankara in the middle of June,² it turns out that he did not establish himself in Britain immediately. He made only a short «visit» to London (apparently incognito, under an alias) at the beginning of September 1939, precisely during the days of the outbreak of the war in Europe, ...to withdraw the sum of 50 thousand pounds from his account in Lloyd's Bank. This caused the swift counteraction of the Treasury which decided that Zog must not be per-

1 Report above of A. Noble dated 24.V.1939.

2 Tel. above of the British ambassador from Ankara dated 26.VI.1939.

mitted in the future to take such large amounts of currency outside the borders of Britain, while the customs received orders to confiscate any amount that he might attempt to take away without special permission.¹

The British documents do not permit us to follow all the movements of Zog and his party in exile. They reflect only those shifts that were co-ordinated with the British authorities. Thus it turns out that Zog was in France during the days of the «debâcle», that is, the fall of France in June 1940, in face of the attack by the Hitlerite troops.² He could not have gone there intending to stay for long because he could not possibly have been unaware of what opinion the French authorities had about him. One year earlier, when there was talk of granting him asylum in Britain, the Prime Minister of France Daladier, personally, had told the British ambassador in Paris openly that he had no intention of permitting the settlement in French territory of

1 Note of A. N. Noble dated 1.IX.1939 and Treasury Note (Treasury Chambers, Whitehall) dated 12.IX.1939, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23710. In this case, too, the Foreign Office was careful not to «irritate» the Italian Government, especially in such a delicate situation as that of the beginning of the war with Hitlerite Germany. A. N. Noble noted that naturally «it was not the best moment to welcome this undesirable visitor,» but there was a way out — that the «Italian authorities should be informed in advance» the more so because «their secret service was surely following Zog's movements». Write-up above of A. N. Noble dated 1.IX.1939.

2 According to Foreign Office memorandum dated 17.VII.1940, PRO-FO/371 «Albania 1940». File No. 24868.

an «appalling gangster» who had taken bribes from Mussolini with both hands.¹ Although the British had taken his side («it depends on what they (the French) means by 'bribes'»²), still Zog had not come out any clearer. Therefore he must have stopped in France merely long enough to arrange a passage across the English Channel.

However he had chosen the most unfavourable time because he almost got lost in the chaos that reigned in the rear after the fall of Paris. Again the British extended a hand to him: made a place for him at the last moment in one of the RAF aircraft which brought him and his family to London towards the end of June. But it seems more accurate to say that, together with his family, he was compelled to board a British ship bound for England, despite the heavy English Channel those days.³ His «suite» was to arrive later by way of Spain.⁴

1 Notation of A. N. Noble dated 5.VII.1939, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23710.

2 In connection with this A. Noble noted. «King Zog certainly was not a satisfactory king and he was not a very highly civilized man, but I should hardly have called him 'an appalling gangster' and I should like to know what evidence the French have that the Italians bribed him...» Ibid. The Foreign Office official would again return to the problem in order to contradict the French point of view in a notation dated 12.VII.1939, PRO-FO/371. File No. 23710.

3 E. Barker, «British Policy in South-East Europe in the Second World War», London 1976, p. 48.

4 The luggage was to make even a longer trip. First of all it would never have been thought that the Foreign Of-

Upon his arrival in the British capital — and he had arrived at a time when Italy had entered the war against France and Britain — Zog sent to ask at the Foreign Office «whether there were any other protocol acts which he ought to perform», now that

he would have such an extensive correspondence just about this problem. However, it is a rather curious story that is worth telling. It concerns about 150 suitcases and trunks of «personal belongings», which could be transported to England only by sea. From France they had arrived at San Sebastian in Spain and had been left there, since under the existing conditions, it was difficult to find a place in the infrequent ships that connected the Spanish coast with the British ports. Zog once again sought the help of the Foreign Office, which not only did not refuse, but pursued the matter patiently for several months on end.

The shipping and insurance charges, Spanish customs duties, British customs duties, etc. — these are the matters dealt with in scores of notes exchanged between Zog, the Foreign Office, the British Embassy in Madrid and the consulate of San Sebastian. In the end, the luggage was landed at Liverpool in February 1941, but the custom-house refused to release it without inspection and payment of duty, because Zog did not have immunity. The experts of the Foreign Office were consulted and although they confirmed Zog's position, at the same time they recommended that a concession should be made for «good behaviour». While these talks were going on, the luggage was destroyed in the Liverpool customstore in one of the night raids by the German airforce. However Zog still did not give up. A year later he claimed «war reparations» and the British authorities agreed to repay 20 per cent of the value... as assistance for this «ex-sovereign who is pursued so ruthlessly by fate». (The many documents that mention this matter are included mainly in two files — one of 1940 and the other of 1941, respectively PRO-FO/371 «Albania 1940» File No. 24868 and PRO-FO/371 «Albania 1941» File No. 29709.)

he came to settle there permanently, for example an appointment with the Prime Minister, Chamberlain, or perhaps a visit to Buckingham Palace, to King George.¹

Quite unexpectedly, on July 3, they told him from the Foreign Office that «their sojourn here could, however, only be regarded as temporary» and that in the existing circumstances it would be better if he were to settle in the USA.² One day before this, on July 2, a meeting had been held in the office of the assistant secretary of the Foreign Office, O. Sargent, with the participation of a group of functionaries to examine the «problem of ex-King Zog». Only one person there — the former British Minister to Albania Ryan — expressed the belief that things could develop in the future so that Zog could be used again as a «figure-head» in Albania. All the others concluded that he was a squeezed lemon.³

Passing on to the future of Albania itself, the opinion of the meeting was that at the end of the war «it would be found convenient to leave the Italians in possession of Albania, in order that they might act as a counterweight to Germany». (A small illustration of the big game of the «balance of powers» which is so dear to British diplomacy!) If the fate

1 Report of P. Dixon on the conversation with S. Martin («Minister of the Household») and G. Naçi (ex-secretary of Zog's legation in Paris) dated 29.VI.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

2 Report of A. Ryan on the appointment with Zog dated 3.VII.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

3 Report entitled «Albania» dated 2.VII.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

of Albania were sealed in this manner the ledger on Zog could be considered closed. That is why the meeting charged Ryan with the task of notifying Zog of the «firm recommendation» of the British Government that he should leave at once for America.¹

The idea took a very concrete form, since even the problem of the mode of departure was discussed. Among other things, Zog also asked about security for the transport of the cases of gold which he kept closely guarded in his hotel suite.² At this point they remembered that... «this hen» layed different eggs from the others. It must be thought that the gold was one of the reasons for the revision of the decision, because otherwise there is no explanation why such special interest was displayed in the cases by the British Treasury precisely during those days.³

The words of General Jocelyn Percy, who was formerly chief of Zog's gendarmerie and now had intervened at the British War Office to prove Zog's usefulness, must have carried weight in keeping Zog in Britain.⁴ During those days the whole Albanian problem must have been looked into again, as appears from a memorandum presented to the Foreign

1 Report entitled «Albania» dated 2.VII.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

2 Report of P. Dixon on conversation with S. Martini, «(Minister of the Household» of Zog) dated 12.VII.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

3 A number of facts about this are to be found in the file, which continues in the series «Albania 1941». PRO-FO/371. File No. 29709.

4 Report of P. Dixon on the conversation with Major Kenyon at the War Office dated 19.VII.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

Office by a representative of the Liberal Party, Hodgkinson, an «expert» on Albania, who proposed the setting up of an «Albanian office» at the Foreign Office.¹

Thus, the possibility of using Zog was not discarded. He was left in London where he stayed until after the end of the Second World War. He was installed in one of the most luxurious hotels of the British capital, the «Ritz», where besides the rooms above ground he had an underground apartment, all concrete, which protected him from the bombs of the German aircraft. Together with him was «the court» in miniature, complete with the Queen, the crown prince, the princesses with the scions of «royal stock» and the lickspittle courtiers. During all these years Zog was undoubtedly a personage, but a tragicomic one. At times he shrouded himself with the aura of the victim that provokes compassion, at other times he came out in the apparel of «the bravest of all» who could hardly wait to hurl himself into the flames to save «his people». Derided and scorned here, encouraged by attention, care and promises there. And these ebbs and flows in his fortunes give us a reflection of the play of politics and the zigzags of diplomacy.

According to the British authorities, throughout his stay Zog was in the position of a private person. He did enjoyed neither the «immunity of a sovereign» nor «diplomatic immunity». This means that he no longer had the treatment reserved for reign-

1 Memorandum of the Hodgkinson in PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

ing sovereigns nor even that reserved for diplomats. This, of course, was predetermined ever since the end of October 1939, when the British decided to recognize the annexation of Albania by fascist Italy.¹ Formally they did not alter Zog's position even after Italy's entry into the war alongside of Hitlerite Germany in June 1940. They did not even remove the condition that they had imposed on him at the start, that he must not carry on any political activity in the territory of Great Britain.²

However, if we take into account the entire period of the war, the relations that the British authorities maintained in fact with Zog up to the year 1944, it is difficult to accept that he was treated simply as a private person. First, an authorized representative of the Foreign Office, the former minister to Tirana, Ryan, was accredited to Zog, not officially, but nevertheless in a sort of way. He was charged with maintaining regular contact with him, and held talks, after which he presented detailed reports to the Foreign Office. These reports allow us to judge what Zog was for the British policy at that time, how he was used, what plans and projects were made with him and about him. From them we learn that the condition prohibiting his political activity was not applied in those cases when Zog was included, even temporarily, in the plans of the Foreign Office on the initiative of the latter. Whereas

1 Notation of R. Bowker for Assistant Secretary O. Sargent dated 13.VII.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

2 See report of A. Ryan on appointment with Zog dated 23.VII.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

when he himself took even the smallest badly calculated step, he was «put on the mat» with little ceremony, and then he accepted his lot with a «humility» that was highly esteemed. Somewhere in one of the files of March 1941, these comments of the Assistant Secretary O. Sargent about the «Highland» king, can be read: «We need not become worried from what he might say. He is entirely dependent upon us and is not likely, even if he does feel he is being slighted, to cut off his nose to spite his face.»¹ This is how the gentlemen with white gloves and starched collars expressed themselves about his ex-«Majesty».

1 Notation of O. Sargent, March 1941, PRO-FO/371. File No. 29718.

PROJECTS AND PLANS BEHIND THE SCENES

By recognizing the conquest of Albania by fascist Italy, which it did in October 1939, Britain rejected the international acts on the independence of Albania before and after the First World War, to which it itself was a party. However this did not continue for more than a few months. In June 1940, Italy entered the war against France and Britain. This gave the British Government the opportunity to consider itself free from the declaration of October 1939, in connection with the conquest of Albania. This it did with another statement in the House of Commons in June 1940, in which it «reserved the right to complete freedom of action in regard to any commitment it had assumed earlier towards the Italian Government in connection with the zones of the Mediterranean, North and East Africa and the Middle East.»¹ The aim of this round-about phrase was to

1 E. Barker, op. cit. p. 49.

withdraw the recognition of the occupation of Albania, which the British Government had conceded to Italy a few months earlier.

Did this mean that Britain had returned to its former position and reaffirmed the validity of the great powers' agreements of 1913, that recognized Albania as an independent state? No! The note of the Foreign Office precisely of those days put it clearly that «this (new declaration) does not imply the recognition of an independent Albania».¹ From this time to the end of 1942, British diplomacy was to make many projects and plans in connection with Albania, but without any commitment to Albania's independence after the war. Its constant concern was to be that nothing should be interpreted in its actions as indicating that the aim of British policy in Albania was the re-establishment of the country's independence.

In September 1940, when the Foreign Office issued the first directive to the BBC which was preparing to commence its broadcasts in the Albanian language, the main instruction was that «any concrete promise about the restoration of the independence of Albania»² must be avoided.

It cannot be denied that a day was coming when the Albanian problem was to be pulled out of the «dark corners» to which it had been consigned. However Britain's new concern over Albania did not ori-

1 E. Barker, op. cit. p. 49.

2 Ibid.

ginate from the Foreign Office but from the War Office.¹

This ministry had under its control a number of secret organizations whose duty was the organizing of «subversive activities» behind the enemy's lines. The branches of these organizations, which were active at that time in the territories of Yugoslavia and Greece, turned their eyes toward Albania, too, in the spring of 1940, when it was becoming clear that Italy was preparing to enter the war. When this became an accomplished fact, in July-August the «possibility of provoking disturbances behind the lines in Albania» began to be studied concretely. The first intelligence and organizational measures were taken through the British agents who went all over the Balkans, visiting Athens, Belgrade, Sofia, Istanbul and Ankara. Native agents, such as Gani and Seit Kryeziu, Mustafa Gjinishi and Abaz Kupa were recruited and their infiltration from the north (of the country) was organized.

All this is more or less known from the book «Sons of the Eagle», by J. Amery published in 1948².

1 It was not by chance that it was precisely the War Office that sent an officer of the Army's secret service, Major Kenyon, to the Foreign Office in July to try to change the first decision to send Zog to America, because it could be that he might be used as a «figure-head.» According to the report of P. Dixon on the conversation with major Kenyon dated 19.VII.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

2 Julian Amery «Sons of the Eagle». London 1948. Interesting information about the attempts of these secret organizations in connection with Albania in the summer of 1940 can be found in a series of documents included in PRO-FO/371. File No. 24866. Refer to a report dated 25.VIII.1940 and P. Dixon's promemoria dated 19.IX.1940. Ibid:

The author, an ex-officer, was in Albania during the war. But now all the behind — the — scenes activities are brought to light. From the military and the Secret Service the matter passed into the hands of diplomacy. In several meetings between representatives of the Foreign Office and the War Office an initial conclusion was reached — that Zog should not be forced to go to America.¹ The idea that he might serve as a «rallying point» for all the forces of resistance inside and outside Albania, slowly began to gain ground.

At the Foreign Office they were clear that the political aspect of the problem, also, could not be neglected. Did these projects implicate the future of Albania, and to what degree and in what way? A second conclusion was reached that both the «status» of Albania and its borders could be subject to examination at the Peace Settlement after the end of the war. At this point the idea was expressed that «as in the past, Albania will not be able to exist without the support of a great power». Suppositions were made, too, that this power might be Italy (see above), but its place might be taken by Yugoslavia and Greece which could «guarantee» Albania jointly.² It can be gathered from this that the project foresaw the recruiting of Albanian merce-

1 Report of P. Dixon dated 30.VII.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

2 Report of P. Dixon dated 12.XI.1940, together with notations that follow by P. Nichols dated 13.XI.1940, and that of Dixon after conversation with O. Sargent dated 15.XI.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

naries, using them merely as «cannon fodder» for some partial and immediate military objectives, without any commitment by Great Britain on the political plane.¹

In this flow of ideas, at the end of September, it was decided at the Foreign Office that as soon as possible an Albanian central committee should be set up in London, and with its branches, «subsidiary committees», in other places. The London Committee, which was to be secret and unofficial, was to be headed by general Percy. It would include British «experts» on Albania as well as representatives of Albanian emigrants, certainly headed by Zog, then Tajar Zavalani, etc.²

The matter was taken no further in this initial phase, because neither Yugoslavia nor Greece were involved in the war and were being very careful to ensure that the activity of British agents in their territories, with Albania as their objective, was not used as a cause for an attack against them by Italy and Germany.

However, as is known, fascist Italy found the cause (the murder of Daut Hoxha) and at the end of October 1940, the war against Greece began. Immediately, the project in connection with Albania came to the surface once again, the more so since

¹ «We do not want to tie ourselves down as far as the future status of Albania is concerned», wrote P. Dixon in his memorandum dated 18.IX.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24866.

² Report of P. Dixon dated 25.IX.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24866.

the military actions took on an unexpected turn, forcing the Italian troops to retreat along the whole front. At the War Office they were convinced that a general insurrection in the Italian rear area would be of great assistance to Greece.¹

Zog pricked up his ears, thought the time had come and began to convince the British that he, and he alone, held the key to the success of the operation. He said that long before he had hidden about 20 thousand rifles in his native district. The highlanders were only waiting for word from him to rise to their feet and in a few days there would be more than 30 thousand insurgents in the northern districts. Moreover he was very familiar with the country and could give valuable advice as to the direction that the subsequent attack by the Greek troops at the front should take.² At his meeting with Ryan in the first week of November, Zog also proposed a «concrete plan» of action: he was ready to go to Istanbul where there were about 14 thousand Albanians with whom he could organize an armed force — an Albanian legion — which, with the consent of the Greek Government, could land at Salonica and then be sent to the front to hold a small sector... From this sector Zog would establish contact

¹ This and many arguments connected with it are reflected in a whole series of documents in files PRO-FO/371. File No. 24867 and 24868. See especially the note of P. Dixon dated 30.X.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24867.

² Report of functionary of SO2 Philip Browd on conversation with Zog at the «Ritz» Hotel dated 23.XI.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

with the northern districts of Kosova and Dibra, in order to raise them in insurrection.¹

Surprisingly enough, the military circles fell for it. Of course the British strategists must have been in desperate need to have pinned the slightest hopes on Zog to put things right at the fighting front. Nevertheless it is a fact that to the extent it depended on the British, the project of using him on the Greek front went quite a long way. The secret organs of the War Office, M.I.R. and S.O.2, were particularly interested. In the second half of November it was decided that Zog should be sent to the vicinity of the front on the eve of November 28, so that his presence would serve as a signal to the «northern tribes». It remained to be determined just exactly where. At one time they spoke of dropping him by parachute into Albania, in the north, then they thought of sending him to Greece, then to Egypt and in turn to Turkey, Palestine and Malta.²

The SO2 men displayed excessive zeal when they went to the «Ritz» Hotel on one of those nights of November 1940, and proposed to him that he get on a special RAF aircraft the next day to go to Cairo with the aim of going on in the direction of the theatre of military operations.³ What Zog's reply

1 Report of A. Ryan on meeting with Zog dated 8.XI.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

2 See files of documents entitled «Albania: King Zog» (The end of November — beginning of December 1940) PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

3 See above report of P. Browd dated 23.XI.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

was on this occasion does not come out very clearly. Certain documents tell us that he wavered at the prospect of leaving his comforts at the «Ritz» and going to wear himself out among difficulties and privations of life in the firing line. Other information tells us that he imposed the prior condition of a meeting either with the British Prime Minister Churchill, or with the Foreign Secretary Halifax.¹

In any case this brought to light once again the political side of the problem.² This explains why the Foreign Office, also, was taken up with it no less seriously. Of course the military considerations could not be overlooked. However two problems demanded special attention in this case: the personal position of Zog and the «status» of Albania at the end of the war. While the former could be got over relatively easily with a general formula which would not upset anyone (for instance «the question of the regime will be decided after the war»), the latter demanded a more precise reply involving a clear commitment. Although the concepts of British diplomacy on Albania and the Albanians in the forties did not differ much from those of the past century and the beginning of our century — still there were some in the Foreign Office who thought it difficult

1 See above report of P. Browd dated 23.XI.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

2 The political aspect of the problem is broadly treated in two memoranda of P. Dixon, one dated 28.XI.1940, and the other 4.XII.1940, also supported by the thoughts of P. Nichols and O. Sargent. Both memoranda in question are to be found in PRO-FO/371. File No. 24867.

for these people, no matter how backward, to undertake such a far-reaching action without first knowing what was to be done with their country in the future.

Then was it not necessary for a declaration to be made on Albania, one which, besides non-recognition of the Italian occupation, must also contain the reaffirmation of its independence? The gesture could be even more effective if it were linked with the approaching celebration of November 28, on which occasion Zog could call on the Albanians for an uprising.¹

However here the Foreign Office arrived at what must have long been a postulate of its policy on the Albanian question: nothing can be undertaken in Albania without consulting the Greek Government.² Thus, there could be no talk of a declaration on the future of Albania if Greece would not agree. True, during those days, in a moment of «magnanimity» and in the atmosphere of optimism created by the successes at the front, the Greek Prime Minister at that time, General Metaxas, had said that the Greeks were fighting not only for themselves, but also for the freedom of all the oppressed peoples, hence for the «liberation of Albania», too.

However, when Athens was asked confidentially about the plan of the Albanian uprising, as well as the proposed declaration on Albania, there was immediate opposition. Zog was not admitted to

¹ *Ibid.*

² Memorandum of P. Dixon dated 11.XII.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

Greek territory nor was the independence of Albania looked upon favourably. It was explained that Metaxas really did speak about the *liberation* of Albania, but he made no mention of its *independence* after the war. If the Greek troops were to «liberate» the southern provinces, Korça and Gjirokastra, they would not do this in order to leave them again to the independent Albania.¹

At the Foreign Office they showed a complete understanding both for this stand of Athens and for the Greek aims at this time. As long as Greece

¹ The chief of the Southern Department, P. Nichols personally dealt with this theme at the end of November. In an official letter sent to the S.O.2 official, Jebb, he informed him that the Foreign Office had just received from Athens the French version of the speech that General Metaxas had delivered over the radio on November 22, 1940, on the occasion of the fall of Korça into the hands of the Greek troops. He had said that the Greeks «are fighting not only for their own existence but also for that of the other peoples of the Balkans, *as well as for the liberation of Albania*» (Italics in the original). «However», observed Nichols, «*liberation* has an entirely different meaning from the word *independence* in Greek and it is clear that what General Metaxas wanted to say is that Greece is fighting for the liberation of Albania from Italian rule, but does not in any way intend to commit itself to the restoration of an independent Albania.» In concluding this reasoning, that sounds much more like a very stale play on words, Nichols added that «this is, of course, point for point, identical with the line that we are pursuing, and it is unnecessary to stress of what great importance it is for us to be in step with the Greek Government in our policy towards Albania». Official letter of P. Nichols sent to Jebb dated 29.XI.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

Several days later, P. Dixon was to analyse very clearly the meaning of General Metaxas's declaration in his me-

was able to occupy the southern districts of Albania with its own forces, then no reason was seen why they should not remain to its possession even after the war. In general it could be accepted as a criterion that the right of Greece to grab as much territory as its troops were «capable» of taking from the Italian troops in the war, should be recognized as of now. This made it necessary that if any declaration on Albania were to be issued, it should be in such general terms as to avoid discouraging the Albanians and angering the Greeks. For instance, a way out could be the formula that the «status of Albania and its borders would be settled after the war».

At the beginning of December three representatives of S.O.2, under the chairmanship of O. Sargent, met to discuss this problem in its various aspects. After the S.O.2 representatives through Major Taylor pointed out the usefulness of the Albanians as «potential allies» in the war against Italy, they expressed the opinion that only a declaration that would contain an «explicit» promise of Great Britain on the independence of Albania could arouse the

morandum of December 11, 1940, when he said that, true, General Metaxas «has announced to the world that Greece is fighting for the liberation of Albania. In actual fact one knows that no single Greek attaches the slightest importance to shedding his blood for the freedom of Albanians, and General Metaxas no doubt made that declaration largely for purposes of window-dressing and appealing to world opinion. Similarly though General Metaxas may be ready to tell us that he hopes for an independent Albania after the war, it is doubtful whether he would like this to be publicly proclaimed.» The above memorandum of P. Dixon dated 11.XII.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

necessary response among the broadest Albanian circles inside and outside the country.

The objections to this were presented by P. Dixon who had replaced Noble at the Foreign Office in the handling of all matters that pertained to Albania. First, he repeated the former thesis that Albania was not capable of existing on its own, that it would need a «protector» power which it was impossible to appoint provisionally at that stage. Without doubt the main thing in Dixon's contribution was the reasoning that «it was likely to prove difficult after the war to find any territorial reward for the Greeks other than what the Albanian provinces offered.»¹

This is another proof that British diplomacy had not changed its methods, that it had no difficulty in returning, after a short interlude, to the old idea of the partitioning of Albania in order to maintain and strengthen the existing alliances and — why not — even to create new alliances.

Needless to say, in the above meeting it was Dixon's opinion that predominated. As a result, both the project of dispatching Zog «somewhere in the vicinity of the fighting lines» and the publication of any declaration were left in abeyance. However, Dixon was not in favour of doing nothing. On December 11, returning once again to the question of «inciting the Albanians against the Italians»,

1 Minutes of December 2, 1940 meeting «for discussion of the policy on the Albanian question» with the participation of O. Sargent, P. Nichols, P. Dixon for the Foreign Office and Jebb, Browd, Major Taylor, as representatives of S.O.2. PRO-FO/371. File No. 24867.

which presented «indisputable military advantages», he wrote: «Whatever may be decided about the proposed declaration (on the independence of Albania — Arben Puto), there can, I think, be no doubt that acts, rather than words will lead to an Albanian revolt, and acts of course in practice mean rifles and money. At our last meeting with S.O. 2 the general conclusion reached was that we should for the present concentrate on supplying plenty of funds for the dual purpose of.

a) buying up a large number of arms which are believed to be hidden in and about the country (Albania — Arben Puto), and

b) bribing Albanian chieftains to resist the Italians.»¹

Clearly this vacillating stand was motivated by the Greek Government's opposition. In connection with this it must be mentioned that Athens at this time still had not announced its territorial ambitions really openly. Perhaps there may be some other secret document, but, at least in those which we saw, we did not find all the views that the Greek leading circles had about the future of Albania clearly formulated. The main attacks were made against Zog as a «defeated ruler», but it is clear that Zog served as a pretext to justify the negative stand towards Albania's independence and its territorial integrity. This was well understood in the Foreign Office. Dixon himself wrote, toward the end of November, that the criticism aimed at Zog was only an «excuse»,

¹ Notation of P. Dixon dated 11.XII.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24868.

because the Greeks wanted to occupy Albania and to keep it for themselves; hence, if they supported Zog «they are frightened of committing themselves to the reconstitution of an independent Albania».¹

This was to come out clearly also on the succeeding days. S.O.2, which naturally looked at the problem from the point of view of military needs, was convinced that the idea of an immediate «Albanian operation» behind the Italian lines should not be completely abandoned. The first project did not work, perhaps because it was connected with Zog and Greek territory. Then another variant could be attempted, without Zog as a direct participant and with Yugoslav territory as a starting point.²

Thus the branch of S.O.2 in Belgrade presented a new scheme of the uprising in the north. This time Gani Kryeziu was to be the principal figure.³ He had his «staff» at Prizren and was operating on account of S.O.2, in the Peja-Prizren region. Gani was to move immediately into northern Albania and was to occupy Kukës. Here he would announce the creation of an «Albanian national Government»

¹ Notation of P. Dixon dated 26.XI.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24867.

² *Ibid.* 17.XII.1940.

³ For the scheme of the revolt in the north there are a large number of documents that are related especially to the second half of December 1940; among them many telegrams exchanged with Belgrade and Athens from which the data listed below are taken. Of special value for this are: a) a telegram dated 20.XII.1940, directed to the branches of the secret service in Belgrade, Athens and Istanbul; b) a report by P. Nichols for minister A. Eden dated 26.XII.1940. All this material is found in PRO-FO/371. File No. 24867.

headed by himself. The presence of Zog was not indispensable at this stage, but his role was not ruled out. On the contrary, this was to be, so to speak, a «royal» government, with Zog as king and Gani as prime minister. Zog would have to make an immediate declaration of support. A declaration was to be expected also from the British Government.

Material support was essential too. Gani was to create an «Albanian army» which would have to be maintained «for at least one month». (What was to be done with it after that was not mentioned, but perhaps this was all that the British command needed.) Therefore supplying it with weapons, clothing and money, especially money, had to be organized. It was estimated that the total cost of the operation would be 60 thousand pounds. Gani would need an advanced payment, too, in the first instalment no more than 5,000 gold napoleons, the rest (up to 10,000) could be dropped to him later by parachute. In general air support was decisive, because the Yugoslav territory would no longer serve as a base. The authorities would turn a blind eye until Gani crossed into the North, then they would close the border with Albania for fear of some Italian or German counteraction.

At first there were encouraging signs even from the Greek side. The British general Heywood had direct talks with Prime Minister Metaxas, who promised a Greek contribution of 5,000 rifles that had been captured from the Italians.¹ Once again it was

¹ See especially telegram from Athens for S.O.2 dated 19.XII.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24867.

the declaration on Albania that ruined everything. London considered that a non-committal declaration (which included only as much as Metaxas himself had said on the *liberation* of Albania, without mentioning *independence* at all) had to have the approval of Athens also. The draft that had been prepared in the Foreign Office was this: «His Majesty's Government welcome the news, just received, that a revolt by Albanian patriots has taken place in the North of Albania against their Italian aggressors. For their part his Majesty's Government are ready to do all they can to lend their support to this movement and thus assist in the liberation of Albania.»¹

However Athens again used its veto; it was against any declaration. It turned out that the whole story was based on a misunderstanding. The Greek Government could not give its approval for an uprising on such a scale as the S.O. 2 scheme envisaged. It had expressed its readiness to support isolated actions of *separate bands* in the Italian rear, but in no way could it support a large-scale uprising that might also have repercussions in the political field.²

Apparently it was considered that the problem might take an undesirable direction on the plane of Anglo-Greek relations in general, so important at this period for British diplomacy, because at the end of December, Foreign Secretary Eden, personal-

¹ The proposed declaration is included in the report prepared for A. Eden dated 26.XII.1940, PRO-FO/371. File No. 24867.

² *Ibid.*

ly, asked for a special report about the «uprising in Albania.»¹

Two marginal notes tell more in a very few lines than whole pages. The first note is that of the chief of the Southern Department, Nichols: «This is a matter in which we cannot act contrary to the wishes of the Greek Government. It is they who are doing all the hard fighting in Albania.»² The second note is by Eden himself and is a real «tweak of the ear» for the people of S.O. 2: «S.O.2 seem to have rushed ahead without much thought.»³ It was only a few weeks since Eden had replaced Halifax at the Foreign Office, and perhaps this was the first time that he had been obliged to look at S.O. 2 and its activities from the angle of policy and diplomacy. Later he would have occasion to become better acquainted with it, to become fed up with its «overdone initiatives» and would write what was to remain as a sentence. One thing must be clear: «S.O. 2 do not and must not conduct foreign policy. They are our instrument and not we theirs.»⁴

Nevertheless, for several weeks more the uprising in Albania was not dismissed from the minds of those in London who had fallen flat on their faces over their military plans for the Greek-Italian war. In January-February 1941 this was a theme that

¹ Refer to the report mentioned above dated 26.XII.1940, entitled «Rising in Albania».

² *Ibid.*

³ Marginal note by A. Eden dated 28.XII.1940, on the above report.

⁴ Note of A. Eden on a report by P. Dixon dated 22.I.1941, PRO-FO/371, Albania 1941. File No. 29711.

was constantly harped on at the War Office. In the minds of the military experts it was now assuming a much simpler form. There was no time to wait. The military situation was changing rapidly. The Greek troops had run out of steam, while on the other hand, the threat of the German intervention against Yugoslavia and Greece was becoming more marked. Therefore the «political and diplomatic speculation» had to be curtailed and urgent action was necessary: either the uprising in Albania had to be organized within a month (from February 15), or otherwise it was senseless, since it would no longer be of any help to the Greeks. But what would happen to the Albanian rebels when the general outlook was so gloomy? Someone had asked this question and received the terse reply, «the wretched Albanians be left to their fate». In the end even this was abandoned because «it would be impossible now to engineer a revolution in a month's time».¹

We should mention that this indirectly brings out the concept they had in London of the role and function of the resistance movements in Europe during the Second World War. They were to be instruments of war but not political factors as well. This, of course, also determined the British preferences in selecting the motive forces and leading groups of these movements. Thus in the case of Albania, the British plumped for Zog, G. Kryeziu, A.

¹ See sections entitled «Military Situation in Albania» with notations by W. Knight dated 16.II.1941, R. Bowker dated 17.II.1941, J. M. Addis dated 20.II.1941, and O. Sargent dated 26.II.1941, in PRO-FO/371. File No. 29718.

Kupi, and the so-called northern tribes. It still did not occur to them that they had set out for wool and would come home shorn themselves, as the saying goes.

At this time the Albanian question is «at a standstill» for months on end. Even when it is touched upon, this is in relation to Greek pretensions. It is interesting to note that after the defeat and occupation of the whole of Greece by the Axis forces, the Greek Government in exile discards all «moderation» and openly formulated its territorial ambitions in the direction of Albania. Precisely when it has lost all of its national territory, it raises its voice more loudly about «Northern Epirus».

The Greek Prime Minister Tsouderos, who at this time had fled the country, together with the king and the government, addressed the Greek people in June by radio, and among other things, spoke of «the semi-savages of Albania», thus casting aside any appearance of magnanimity and Balkan solidarity, returning once again to the old terminology inspired by active chauvinism.¹ At the end of September the Greek Government in exile presented to the Foreign Office a memorandum in which it set out the diplomatic history of the question of «Northern Epirus», in a way which «proved» the rights of Greece.² In November efforts were made through BBC to commemorate the «fall of Korça» a year

1 Telegram of Foreign Office to Palarety High Commissioner in Pretoria (South Africa), July 1941, PRO-FO/371. File No. 29715.

2 Memorandum of 9 points dated 29.IX.1941. *Ibid.*

earlier, and on this occasion the city was described as «a Greek province which was included within the boundaries of the Albanian Kingdom as a result of the Italian intrigues».¹

Such an overt stand taken by members of the Greek Government in exile certainly put the Foreign Office in a difficult position, exposing it to criticism from the public and in fact protests began to come from several quarters. «We have never supported the cause of Albanian independence,» wrote P. Dixon at the beginning of July,² but he reproached the Greeks in exile for lack of tact, saying that these were not things that could be talked about and settled at this stage.

From this it can be gathered that the Greek aims were not rejected and it is not accidental that precisely at this time in London, too, the plot for the partitioning of Albania thickens. Towards the end of 1941 the Foreign Office finds it essential to have in readiness «special studies» which contain the necessary arguments that will be used at the Peace Settlement. For this the aid of scientific institutions is sought. Dixon turns, in particular, to one of the most renowned British historians, Professor Arnold Toynbee, chief of the Oxford Foreign Research and Press Service Centre. It is known that science and scientists in Britain usually claim complete independence from official policy. However this does not hinder Dixon from dictating in advance to the Ox-

1 Letter of the office of the Greek prime minister to Foreign Secretary A. Eden, dated 28.XI.1941. *Ibid.*

2 Notation of P. Dixon dated 8.VII.1941. *Ibid.*

ford professor the essence of the conclusions with which he must come out in his studies on the future of Albania. For instance, he must handle the problem not only, or not so much, from the «ethnic» point of view, the standpoint of nationality (which would not be greatly in favour of Greek interests), but particularly from the angle of economics and strategy in order to echo the Greek thesis that, after the war, such measures (and in the first place territorial ones) must be taken as to make a repetition of an attack against Greece from Albanian territory impossible.¹

After recommending himself as an «objective» man of science by reorganizing the ethnic individuality of the Albanians, in his long study, Toynbee foresees two possible solutions for Albania: the first — to be left to Italy, the second — to enter a confederacy or a federation together with Yugoslavia and Greece. According to him the latter has the advantage that it also solves the problem of the territorial pretensions of the Greeks to Southern Albania at the same time.² At the Foreign Office they add a third solution to those proposed by Toynbee: simple partition between Yugoslavia and Greece.³

In the files of 1942 and 1943 there are also a

1 Draft of the letter to A. Toynbee, composed by P. Dixon dated 9.X.1941, and the reply of A. Toynbee dated 20.X.1941. *Ibid.*

2 See above letter of A. Toynbee dated 20.X.1941 and the report entitled «Northern Epirus» dated 29.X.1941, PRO-FO/371. File No. 29715.

3 Report on «The Future of Albania» R. G. D. Laffen dated 6.I.1942, PRO-FO/371. «Albania 1942». File No. 33107.

couple of other «studies» on the future of Albania, compiled at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, by R. Laffen and A. Zimmernin.¹ In these, partitioning between Yugoslavia and Greece, with the border lying somewhere near Elbasan, is recommended as the most likely solution. Here, too, we see expressed the idea of the integration of Albania within the Greek-Yugoslav federation — over which it seems that the negotiations between the two royal governments in exile were very close to an understanding in principle. Moreover, when he had heard about it, Zog too, had done some timid probings in order to include his ghostly «kingdom», but in the mind of the designers of the Albanian project Albania would not be accepted as an equal third party, but only as an appendage of the federation. Here and there in such «studies», «solomonic» solutions such as those which were proposed before and after the First World War — of placing Albania under the protection of a «disinterested» state — crop up, this time the «protector» power was to be Denmark (!), a proposal that staggers the imagination.

1 PRO-FO/371 «Albania 1943». File No. 53112.

THE HISTORY OF A DECLARATION

Finally, on December 17, 1942, the Foreign Secretary of Great Britain A. Eden made a special declaration on Albania in the House of Commons. Likewise in December, declarations on the future of our country were made by the governments of the Soviet Union and the United States of America also. Without doubt, this co-ordinated step of three great powers of the anti-fascist coalition had importance for Albania's international position in the circumstances of the Second World War.

Comrade Enver Hoxha had said that the declarations of December 1942 «were a recognition of the struggle and rights of our people», a «great moral and political support for their struggle» as well as a «promise of the freedom and independence of Albania after the end of the war».¹

¹ Enver Hoxha, Works, vol. 1, p. 183, and vol. 2, p. 2 (Alb. ed.).

However, in their policy towards Albania, the three powers did not have identical aims. The difference that was seen between the overall war aims of the Soviet Union and those of the two western powers was, of course, expressed here too. A comparison between the Soviet and British declarations speaks for itself. The essence of the former comes out clearly: «The Soviet Union, which is following the courageous liberation war of the Albanian patriots against the Italian occupiers with whole-hearted sympathy, does not recognize any claim of Italian imperialism over Albanian territory and wishes to see Albania liberated from the yoke of the fascist occupiers and its independence restored.»¹

Eden's declaration also began by expressing, «H.M.G. sympathize with the fate of the Albanians, a people among the earliest victims of Fascist aggression.»² It also said that «they wish to see Albania freed from the Italian yoke and restored to its independence.» Further on, it did not fail to touch on the problem of «the form of the regime and Government to be introduced into Albania,» which «will be a matter for the Albanian people themselves to decide at the end of the war.» But Eden concluded his declaration with two important reservations. The former had to do with the schemes that were still being elaborated about the creation of the Balkan

¹ Vnyeshyaya politika, USSR, vol. 1, p. 329, Moscow 1946.

² Text of A. Eden's declaration in the House of Commons on the 7th of December 1942, PRO-FO/371 «Albania 1942». File No. 33107.

confederacy or federation, hence Eden stressed that «what I have said (i.e. the first part of the declaration that reaffirmed the independence of Albania) does not in any way prejudice the question of Albania's position in relation to such future arrangements as may be reached between the various Balkan States». The second reservation certainly had in mind the Greek territorial pretensions, and therefore Eden added that «His Majesty's Government regard the question of the frontiers of the Albanian State after the war as a question which will have to be considered at the Peace Settlement».¹

The difference strikes the eye immediately. Whereas the Soviet declaration simply affirmed the future of Albania without any limiting condition, the British declaration sought to impose a double restraint on Albanian independence: the prospect of re-examination of the borders and that of making the sovereignty of the Albanian state conditional on the eventual Greek and Yugoslav agreements.

Even earlier, it could be assumed that behind Eden's declaration there was more than what was stated. But only now that we have the documents of the Foreign Office in our hands, can we get an accurate idea of the very long drawn-out and complicated background of this document. Who knows how many reports were compiled, how many drafts were written and torn up, what negotiations went on, in order to arrive at those few words that A. Eden spoke in the House of Commons! In reality the De-

¹ *Ibid.*

cember 7 declaration dominates all the British documents of 1942 that relate to Albania.¹

There is no doubt that Eden's declaration marked a change in the stand maintained by the British Government up till then in regard to the future of our country. But it is interesting to know what were the reasons that impelled it to make such a change. As far as can be seen, there were two main factors that operated in this direction: first — the development of events within Albania, and second — the profound changes in the plane of international policy as a result of the turn in the fortunes of the Second World War.

In Albania the situation was not developing at all according to the forecast made in the Foreign Office. There they thought they held the key to the entire Albanian question; they believed they could direct the events «by command» through Zog, the emigrants, the «tribal chieftains», and the S.O. 2 agents. In reality, even what little information reached them showed that the situation was slipping from their grasp: in November 1941, the Communist Party of Albania had been formed; the actions in the cities had begun, the first detachments had taken to the mountains. Entire regions in the interior of the country seemed to be gradually escaping from the control of the occupiers. That the situation was becoming ever more grave — was indicated by the

¹ One runs into documents concerning this declaration in almost all the files of 1942, however they especially fill up two rather voluminous files, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33107, 33108.

mounting political and military difficulties that the government of Rome could barely conceal. The punitive expeditions of the fascist troops were accompanied with the changing of the guard in the quisling government.

Zog hastened to claim the credit for all those things, presenting them as «fruit of the seed he had left behind», but in London they felt that the resistance movement that was rising in Albania had nothing in common either with the king or with the monarchy. What complicated matters most was that the same trend of development could be observed in the Balkans in general, and in Greece in particular. It was seen clearly that the events in this zone were going beyond the schemes of British diplomacy.

Besides this, the Soviet Union was emerging as an ever more powerful factor in international politics. From the time that the Hitlerite army had been brought to a halt outside Moscow and received heavy blows during the winter of 1941-1942, it was seen that the Soviet Union was not going to be defeated by the German «blitzkrieg». It could be foreseen that some day it would appear as a «menace» on the threshold of «spheres of influence» which Great Britain considered immune to Soviet policy, or, in any case, very remote from the radius of its action. In January 1942, the Soviet ambassador in London, at a meeting with Eden, asked for the first time for clarification of the British Government's views on the future of Albania. It was not difficult for the British Foreign Secretary to evade the question with a few general words, but the fact

did not go unnoticed. Indeed it aroused concern, both in the Foreign Office and in the circles of the Yugoslav and Greek «governments in exile».

In these circumstances, when the winds of change were blowing, when everything was in motion, we can say that British diplomacy had its first premonitions of the danger of being left behind by the march of events. At that time a general shake-up in foreign policy was put forward as an imperative duty in the Foreign Office. This is the background on which the «revival» of London's interest in the Albanian problem must be seen.

In January 1942, Dixon wrote for the first time, that the time had come «for a declaration on the independence of Albania» and got the preparation of appropriate reports under way.¹ At the end of March, Dixon himself prepared a long memorandum.² In it, after giving a summary of what the position of «His Majesty's Government» had been up till then, Dixon forecast that the Foreign Office would soon be faced with the «territorial problems left in the air», including the Greek pretensions to Southern Albania, which were expected to be formulated with redoubled vigour now, with the turn that the military actions in the Mediterranean zone were taking. Differently from before, however, when precisely these claims became the cause for a totally negative attitude of the British Government towards the Alba-

1 Notation of P. Dixon dated 19.I.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33109.

2 Memorandum of P. Dixon «Albania: Present Attitude of His Majesty's Government», dated 30.III.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33113.

nian question, now Dixon argued the need for a reaffirmation of the independence of Albania by Great Britain. The advantages, according to him, were of a two-fold nature: strategic and political. Strategic — because the contribution which a resistance movement in Albania could make was not to be rejected, although they linked the development of this movement (with astounding flippancy) with the announcement of the British declaration. Political — because the definition of the «status» of Albania, if it were done in time, might avert the danger of its turning into an «apple of discord» between Yugoslavia and Greece. Dixon said, «Unless we take the Albanian problem by the horns well before the end of hostilities, and if we leave the future status of Albania entirely unsettled it is to be anticipated that as soon as Greece and Yugoslavia regain their independence, Greek and Yugoslav forces will march into Albania and seize the slabs of territory which they covet. Apart from the odious disadvantages of a fresh outbreak of hostilities, such developments would be fraught with danger for Greco-Yugoslav relations.»¹ And it was hoped that these two states would be the main bastions of British influence in South-east Europe.

However Dixon did not exclude the possibility of amputations of the Albanian territory. On the contrary he presupposed this, and not only in favour of Greece, whose claims he considered «historically and strategically well-founded», but also in favour of Yugoslavia, whose demand to take the

¹ *Ibid.*

«part which belongs to it», would be difficult to reject, according to Dixon. Who then would want the «independence» of an Albania dismembered in this manner? From the memorandum, it seems obvious that the entire aim of Dixon was the «preparation» of Albania to enter as a «third weak unit» in the confederacy or federation of the Balkans, one of the tasks of which, apparently, was «to clean the stables» of diplomacy.¹

From the memorandum we learn also that the Foreign Office not only supported the project of the confederacy or the federation, but also actively pushed it. Indeed the idea was to have found a broader application; this or that «form of the confederacy» could represent «the best system of post-war government, not only for South-east Europe but also for Central Europe». Thus «with the encouragement and approval of His Majesty's Government», the governments in exile of Poland and Czechoslovakia were also set in the course of confederacy agreements at this time.² It is not difficult to see that in the schemes of British diplomacy this chain of confederated states, that stretched from the Mediterranean to the Baltic, was to replace the «cordon sanitaire» of the period between the two wars and to serve as a barrier against the «spread of communism» in Europe after the defeat of the nazifascist powers.

Although Dixon's memorandum consisted in essence, of the principal points of the declaration

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

that Eden was to make in December, in April the step was still considered premature by the heads of the British Foreign Office. On April 3, Assistant Secretary O. Sargent, wrote «I would have preferred to let sleeping dogs lie.»¹

On his part Eden first sought the opinion of the PWE (Political Warfare Executive), an organization that was created especially for the propaganda war against the enemy: could such a declaration on Albania be of any help, or could the goal perhaps be attained by simply strengthening the propaganda in its direction, for instance by increasing the Albanian broadcast of BBC from 5 to 10 minutes.² At the end of April the Director General of the PWE, B. Lockhart, replied in the negative to both questions: the declaration might cause complications after the war, whereas as for the BBC broadcast he said that it was not with it to shorten, to the advantage of Albania, the time offered to the disposition of the other Balkan states, that the radio was not the best means to communicate with the Albanians, that it was sufficient to win the «confidence of the clans» with which the S.O.E had to establish contact. This, according to him, «is the best line of approach» to the Albanian question.³

At the beginning of May, Eden wrote that «on

1 Notation of O. Sargent dated 3.IV.1942. *Ibid.*

2 Notation of A. Eden dated 12.IV.1942. *Ibid.*

3 «In order to rouse the Albanians, we have to win the confidence of the clans, and if S.O.E. have any facilities for establishing communications, this is the best line of approach.» B. Lockhart concluded his reply to Eden, dated 27.IV.1942. *Ibid.*

balance» Lockhart's arguments «are against a declaration, which can wait».¹

Another factor in foreign policy, that could not be underestimated was public opinion, which was now exerting continuous pressure in favour of restoring the independence of Albania. The Albanian emigrants in Britain, in the USA, and many other countries played the primary role in this. These were not only that handful of bankrupt politicians who were trying to regain their positions, but also the thousands upon thousands of honest patriots who were genuinely concerned about the future of their Homeland. The Foreign Office and the Prime Minister Churchill received a flood of letters, telegrams and petitions, the leitmotive of which can be stated in two lines: «Where are the beautiful words about self-determination of the peoples, where is the Atlantic Charter, why don't you state your support for the independence of Albania?»

The «immoral» character (their own expression) of the negative attitude of British policy towards Albania was denounced, not without some effect on public opinion within the country, also by a small group of British personalities. Among them there were ex-ministers of the «Household» of Zog, ex-officers and instructors in his service, who acted simply out of «personal friendship». But there were also others who were impelled by genuine feelings of sympathy for our country. Although the official policy of Great Britain towards Albania has always been a policy pervaded through and through by

1 Notation of A. Eden, dated 10.V.1942. *Ibid.*

utter disdain and cynicism, still, even in that country there have been people whose conscience has been pricked by the injustice and intrigues that the big imperialist powers have engaged in at the expense of a «small and defenceless people».

Particular mention should be made here of Miss Mary E. Durham, a well-known publicist, authoress of a series of works on the events in the Balkans from the beginning of the century up to the First World War. Miss Durham was one of those English women who often surpass men for that «adventurous spirit» which seems to be one of the characteristics of that race. Impelled by the attraction of the exotic, in her youth, she travelled all over the Balkans, became closely acquainted with these parts, and interested herself in the problems and life here. It seems that she also had reasons of health, because Miss Durham suffered from tuberculosis and tried to avoid the severe northern climate by taking refuge in the mild Mediterranean region. In time she developed emotional links, feelings of regret over the condition of these peoples, and the desire to alleviate their poverty and suffering.

Miss Durham was especially interested in the Albanian problem, as is shown in her published works. We need mention only a couple of them, such as «The Struggle for Scutari», published in 1914,¹ and «Twenty Years of the Balkan Tangle» of 1920,²

1 M. E. Durham «The Struggle for Scutari», London 1914.

2 M. E. Durham «Twenty Years of the Balkan Tangle», London 1920.

in which she took the Albanian side completely. We also had the opportunity to examine her manuscripts deposited at the Royal Anthropological Institute, a branch of the British Museum. It is truly a fund full of valuable revelations, drawn from several successive years, beginning early in the century (1904), especially from the northern provinces and from Central Albania: about the country's customs, folklore and the material culture, accompanied by a considerable number of photographs, drawings and paintings, in which Miss Durham displayed real talent. An important place among them is occupied by a pile of notebooks that contain her diary kept during a series of journeys that she made in Albania, especially from 1908 until the year 1914.¹ Leafing through this material one becomes convinced not only of the broad vision of this scientist in the field of Albanian studies, but also of the passion that had been born in the heart of this woman for the fate of a people, trampled upon in the most dishonourable way.

The Second World War found the aging Miss Durham in her eighties. Nevertheless from the beginning of the war until she died at the end of 1943, she wrote several times to the Foreign Office, particular personalities and various organs of the British press, to condemn the apparent indifference of British policy to the fate of Albania. In one of these letters in 1942, sensing what was going on behind the scenes to the detriment of Albania, she wrote to a friend of hers these words that expressed

1 Summaries of parts of M. E. Durham's diary are found in the Archives of the Albanian Institute of History.

all her profound indignation: «This world is a dirty one!»

Of course, Miss Durham was not among the persons who were approved at the Foreign Office. On the contrary she had the reputation of being an «annoying, capricious and extravagant old lady.» Many called her in ridicule the «uncrowned queen of Albania».¹ But her activity was watched step by step. Her correspondence during the war was intercepted by the censors and ended up at the Foreign Office. She «went too far», especially in June 1942, when together with some other personalities, she tried to found a «Friend of Albania Society», which was to have as its aim stimulating British public interest to ensure that Britain quickly took a stand on the Albanian problem.² The Foreign Office promptly intervened at the Home Office that the acquiescence of H.M.G. in the formation of the proposed society should not be interpreted as meaning that «they have given their approval, that they consider such a society to be useful in the present times.»³

However the pressures, that were increasing, were not entirely without effect. In the first week in July they caused a new examination of the Albanian problem in the Southern Department, again with the participation of O. Sargent. Here Sargent himself said that «it is not a matter of deciding the principle of Albanian independence,» which has

1 PRO-FO/371, File No. 33116.

2 PRO-FO/371, File No. 33109.

3 See particularly the note by D. Howard to the Home Office, dated 15.VII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33109.

already been decided.» What was under discussion was only the moment for issuing the declaration because, Sargent stressed, «if we make a declaration of policy we are likely to stir up the Greco-Yugoslav hornet's nest». At the conclusion of the discussion the opinion was expressed that «it is absolutely essential that we should have made some declaration about Albanian independence before the war actually ends», however «until there has been some fresh development».¹

From this it can be gathered that the Greek pretensions, in the first place, still carried weight in finally determining the British Government's stand on the problem of the future of Albania.

We notice the same vacillations up till the beginning of October. But what happens then, so that, about the middle of November, Eden orders the urgent preparation of the documents necessary to make the declaration on the independence of Albania? No doubt the combination of factors that were mentioned above, operated powerfully in the autumn of 1942: both the situation in Albania and the Balkans and the military developments on the eastern front. However we confess that we cannot speak about them all here, as they say, with documents on hand. We cannot speak for the simple

1 Report of Dixon dated 10.VII.1942 followed by note of D. Howard of the same date and another note of O. Sargent dated 11.VII.1942, whose conclusions are approved by A. Eden himself dated 12.VII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33110.

reason that all the documents were not made fully available to us. A series of materials that have been removed from the files, as well as one entire file, all of which are closed until the year 2018,¹ relate precisely to the autumn of 1942.

Do these documents conceal information essential to the problem we are handling? We believe that they contain the full explanation of the causes that impelled the British Government to overcome its earlier hesitations and to take the step towards the reaffirmation of Albania's independence. The detailed information must be there about those «new developments» for which the Foreign Office was waiting before it could take such a step.

However, we can suppose that the development of the military situation played a major role. Let us recall that the Western Allies did not respond to the ever more important successes of the Red Army on the eastern front, in the winter of 1942-43, with the opening of the «second front» in Europe, as President Roosevelt had solemnly promised in the agreement concluded with Molotov in May 1942, but only with the so-called Operation Torch, i.e. the landing of American troops in North Africa. Here they joined the British troops that had long been operating in Egypt, and thus the development of military operations in the Mediterranean basin took a new impetus. But this was a concession made to

¹ For example in the series «Albania 1942», file No. 33115 is closed until the year 2018. There were documents removed from files 33107, 33110, 33112 as well, in the same series.

the strategic concept of Churchill who thought that the landing on the continent had to be undertaken from the south, with the obvious aim of blocking the way before the Soviet troops could advance into South-eastern and Central Europe.

With the beginning of the operation, the British diplomacy hastened to make all possible gains on the political plane, too. It is no accidental that among the arguments mentioned in November in a whole series of documents in favour of making the declaration on Albania, the «change in the situation in the Mediterranean» takes pride of place. In connection with this, Assistant Secretary O. Sargent (precisely he who had blocked the initiatives up till then), wrote on November 18: «We are now on the offensive in the Mediterranean and a declaration about the future of Albania would be interpreted in the Balkans as evidence of this offensive spirit.»¹ On his part, the chief of the Southern Department D. Howard added: «I think the earlier the better so that advantage may be taken of encouraging and winning the support of the Albanians. Guerilla activities within Albania may at some moment be useful, especially if they could be in co-operation with General Mihailovic,» in Yugoslavia.²

From the middle of November the problem was treated with that same «offensive spirit» that Sargent mentioned and that Eden himself now sup-

¹ Notation of O. Sargent dated 18.XI.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33107.

² Notation of D. Howard dated 16.XI.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33107.

ported.¹ On December 3, he brought it up in the «War Cabinet», a restricted meeting of the British Government that decided the most important political and military problems during the time of the war. It is worth noting that, while Eden stressed in his accompanying report that the declaration committed Great Britain «only to recognizing the independence of Albania», but not to its territorial integrity,² — in the attached draft the provision in connection with the borders was still not included.³ The «War Cabinet» approved the proposed declaration in the form it was presented, but on condition that first the opinion of the governments of the dominions had to be sought.⁴

It might be thought that the latter were very remote from the Albanian question. And so they were in fact. What could move the dominions in this problem other than the interests of others? This is what had occurred after the First World War in 1920, when two of the most important dominions — The Union of South Africa and Canada — had come out as «ardent supporters» of the admission of Albania to the League of Nations. On that occasion

1 A. Eden wrote on November 20: «Yes; please draft declaration. When it is ready I would like to circulate it, for information to War Cabinet with a brief covering note. This might all be got ready.» *Ibid.*

2 Memorandum of secretary of state for foreign affairs for the War Cabinet dated 1.XII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33107.

3 Annex of above memorandum. *Ibid.*

4 Extract from the conclusions of the War Cabinet dated 3.XII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33107.

these two dominions had acted on the demand of the metropolis, Britain, which had offered its support for the admission of our country to the international organization of that time, in exchange for the rights to our underground petroleum resources. Now, in 1942, the Union of South Africa came on the scene again but... in order to put the declaration of Albania's independence in doubt. This time it expressed the viewpoint and aims of the Greek Government in exile. The Prime Minister of South Africa, General Smuts, wrote to the Foreign Office on December 8, that he had talked with the king and prime minister of Greece (at that time in Pretoria), who had expressed the hope that the «problem of Northern Epirus» would, at last, find a solution after the Second World War. After recommending the king of Greece as a «true and loyal friend of Britain» and Greece itself (monarchic, of course) as a «worthy ally in that fluid part of Europe», Smuts asked that the declaration should at least contain a provision which would keep the question of borders open.¹

We saw that this was also the position of the Foreign Office. But it found itself facing a delicate question: Should it say this openly in the declaration, or should it keep it to itself? Because the aim of the declaration was to win the Albanians over and not to scare them away. However, as Dixon was to write, «if General Smuts has read it as implying recognition of the frontiers, others will do the same.

1 General Smuts' remarks were sent to the Dominions Office, with a written statement by the High Commissioner S.F. Waterson dated 8.XII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33107.

This would lead to misunderstanding among the Albanians, who might later accuse us of having let them down.»¹ That is why Dixon proposed and Eden accepted that the provision on the borders should be included directly in the text of the declaration that would be made a few days later in the House of Commons.²

The handling of the matter with the other two great allied powers is also of interest. Here the open discrimination that the Foreign Office wanted to make against the Soviet Government should be pointed out. While Washington was to be *consulted*, Moscow was simply to be *informed*; in fact the later the better, if possible the day before the declaration was made. Thus, the State Department was informed much earlier, in November its opinion was sought, and it was suggested that it, too, should make a more or less similar declaration. Up till the beginning of December it was intended to act differently with the Soviet Government, as emerges from a notation by Dixon. «It was proposed», he wrote, «to suggest to the Soviet Government, as we are suggesting to the U.S. Government, that they should make a similar declaration regarding the independence of Albania. In the Balkans, we are, so to speak, competitors with the Soviet Government, and there seems to be no reason to go out of our way

1 Notation of P. Dixon dated 10.XII.1942. *Ibid.*

2 «Very well», wrote A. Eden on December 11, on the bottom of P. Dixon's notation, «I am prepared to agree,» but he asked that the work be hastened so that the statement could be made «in the last week before Christmas.» *Ibid.*

to suggest to the Soviet Government that they should earn marks with any Balkan people.»¹ Could it be that this whole business stems from this «rivalry»? Might this not also explain the haste with which British diplomacy changed its tune of the Albanian question in the autumn of 1942?

At any rate, such a boycott of the Soviet Government was considered quite out of order. A high official of the Foreign Office (whose name we could not decipher) wrote, right after Dixon, that this would offend the Soviet Government, the more so since it had its own views on the Albanian problem, as was indicated by what Stalin personally had said to Eden in December 1941, that «Albania might make an independent State with that independence guaranteed.»² The reaction of the Soviet Embassy in London to the delay with which it was informed of the step that was being prepared (December 7), confirmed this view. The Soviet ambassador protested saying that the Soviet Government should be not merely informed but also consulted in such cases³.

The matter also became the cause of a minor incident with the US Government. The American statesman Hull issued the US declaration on Albania to the press on December 10, i.e., a week before

1 Notation of P. Dixon, dated 4.XII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33107.

2 Notation with an illegible handwriting and signature, dated 4.XII.1942. *Ibid.*

3 Regarding the «misunderstanding» with the Soviet Government on the statement to be made on Albania, there is a file in PRO-FO/371. File No. 33108. See especially the summary of P. Dixon, dated 12.XII.1942. *Ibid.*

Eden was to make his declaration to the House of Commons¹. In the Foreign Office the comment was made that this was an attempt of the State Department to seize the initiative of the Albanian question from the hands of the British «with the obvious aim of winning points among the local Albanians».² However, the quarrel remained «within the family».

As could be expected, the strongest pressures that the Foreign Office had to withstand were again from the Greek side. When it saw that it could not annul the intended declaration the government in exile demanded that «at least» the text should say explicitly that «Northern Epirus» would go to Greece after the war.³ But this was no longer the time of the Greek-Italian war. The Greek actions had diminished. Albania was assuming more and more importance of its own for the British policy, as a sphere of direct interests; it could no longer be treated as subsidiary to the policy with Greece, as before. Of course Greece would get something, but would get as much as was given and not as much as it demanded. Voices were now being heard at the Foreign Office that the Greek Government could not «censor» British policy. The objections of Greek political circles in exile almost took the form of a govern-

1 Report of P. Dixon dated 11.XII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33107.

2 Notation of O. Sargent dated 12.XII.1942, *Ibid.*

3 On this there are numerous documents that pertain to the first half of December 1942 on file PRO-FO/371. File No. 33108. See particularly the note of the Greek Ambassador in London Agnides, addressed to A. Eden dated 14.XII.1942, *Ibid.*

mental crisis after the publication of the statement. Vice-Prime Minister Kanellopoulos threatened from Cairo that he would resign in protest because the «principles of the Atlantic Charter are being applied to Albania, a non-ally, whereas the same thing is not being done for all the Greek population.»¹

It was here that Kanellopoulos «lost all sense of proportion» when, apart from Southern Albania, he included in his list of Greek territorial claims Cyprus which Britain had held since the Congress of Berlin in 1878. This so enraged Eden that he sent a telegram to Cairo on December 18, in which he said: «This young man needs his bottom smacked.»² To straighten the matter out the king of Greece had to intervene personally. He had just arrived those days in London and wished to find out whether they, in the Foreign Office attached importance to keeping Kanellopoulos in the Government.³ It appears that the question of the declaration on Albania had been a theme of the «struggle for power» among the Greek political circles in exile; it gave Kanellopoulos an excuse to attack the Prime Minister Tsouderos by accusing him of weakness in order to take his place at the head of the government. However Eden made it clear that «in this dispute M. Tsouderos has the firm support of His Majesty's Government.»⁴

1 Message of Vice-Prime Minister Kanellopoulos transmitted by telegram from Cairo to the Foreign Office dated 19.XII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33108.

2 E. Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

3 Report of O. Sargent on his meeting with the king of Greece dated 22.XII.1942, *Ibid.*

4 Telegram of A. Eden to Cairo dated 22.XII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33108.

All this diplomatic preparation of the British initiative on the Albanian question meant that the date for making the declaration had to be postponed several times: at first it was set for November 28, then for December 3, 9, 16 in succession, until finally it was arranged that the «question» was asked in the House of Commons and Eden read the statement on December 17, in the form of a reply. Perhaps it is a paradox, but this fact, also, indicates what was said above, that now the Foreign Office was in a hurry. Why and how? We think that there is something here which has not come to light. The question remains always unanswered.

Finally, when speaking of the statement of December 1942, it must be stressed that, although it had its importance in reaffirming Albanian independence, still it did not denote any reversal of the traditional methods of British diplomacy in its handling of the Albanian problem. For Britain the position of our country in the Second World War did not undergo any essential alteration. True, the National Liberation War was recognized, but only up to a point: Albania was not put on an equal footing in the ranks of all the anti-fascist «united nations». This was Eden's personal view, not only in December 1942, when he made the statement, but also a year later, when the war against fascism in general had taken a clear turn towards the final victory, and the movement in our country had opened up a real war front.

This can be judged by a letter that Eden himself wrote at the beginning of October in 1943 to L. Hore-Belisha, M. P. A few days earlier he had

brought Eden a letter from a group of Albanians who complained that the public statements made at that time, whether by the Prime Minister Churchill, or by the Anglo-American military leaders, like General Eisenhower and General Wilson, did not mention the «fighting actions of the Albanian guerrillas». The suspicion was expressed that perhaps this was due to the «Greek-Yugoslav pressures». In his reply Eden did not deny this at all; he said that «it is quite true that the Greeks, and to a lesser degree, the Yugoslavs do feel strongly about Albania, and since they are our allies we are bound to consider their feelings».

However Eden pointed out that this was not the main reason. «The main reason for not mentioning the Albanians in the same breath as the Greeks and Yugoslavs was quite simple, that the latter are our Allies while the former are not. Hence, the Albanians should not expect to be treated as if they were our Allies.»¹ The chief of British diplomacy requested that this be said openly to the authors of the letter.

Certainly the matter could not be stated more plainly and we doubt whether it leaves any room for comment. One thing must be added here, that all the British documents create not just the impression, but the profound conviction, that with Anthony

¹ Letter of A. Eden sent to L. Hore-Belisha M.P. at the House of Commons dated 2.X.1943, PRO-FO/371. File No. 37137.

Eden, British policy reaches the culmination of cynicism in its attitude towards Albania. And since cynicism has never excluded either double-dealing or hypocrisy, we shall have occasion to see how, in our case, the British diplomats have given ample proof of their incomparable mastery in combining these two «qualities».

ATTEMPTS TO FORM «THE ALBANIAN GOVERNMENT IN EXILE»

During the whole period of the Second World War no «Albanian Government» was formed outside the borders of Albania. With us it was different from what occurred with many other occupied countries, whose governments, even after they had fled their countries, continued to maintain a fiction of power in exile. This, of course, spared the National Liberation Movement and the people's revolution in Albania a number of difficulties. But it should not be thought that the war and the revolution in our country had the aid of Britain in this matter.

In the final analysis, the main reason that a so-called government in exile was not created, is without any doubt the fact that the National Liberation Movement from the start restricted and finally completely blocked the way to any attempt in this direction. Contrary to the predictions that might have been made outside the country, our people's war grew and developed, not as an instinctive reaction for self-defence, not as a blind outburst of the «rebellious spirit» without any leadership or aim. It

developed and crystallized as a conscious movement that was able not only to express and to materialize mature aspirations and aims in the flow of Albanian history, but also to produce from its own ranks a reliable leadership, the Communist Party, which was its heart and soul, as well as complex leading organs that immediately assumed the attributes of an authentic state power. The closer to the end of the war the more they were extended and perfected, to the point that they gave us a complete system of people's state power, that left no room for any duplication or «grafting».

Without doubt, from this point of view, the Congress of Përmet was of great importance. The «History of the PLA» says: «The Communist Party assessed the moments the country was passing through in the spring of the year 1944 as decisive for the fate of the people's revolution in Albania. It became imperative that all enemy attempts to turn the situation to their advantage should be frustrated, that all the tricks of the internal and foreign reaction should be beaten, that such military and political measures should be taken as to ensure the complete liberation of the country and the triumph of the people's revolution. In this connection, the Central Committee defined as the key link the strengthening and legalization of the power of the national liberation councils as the sole legal power of the Albanian people, the setting up of the new Albanian State with its own democratic government and its own regular army.»¹

1 «History of the PLA», Tirana 1969, p. 163 (Alb. ed.).

This was precisely the task of the Congress of Përmet in May 1944. Emerging as the faithful expression of the sovereignty of the Albanian people in the conditions of the war for liberation, the Congress founded the supreme organs of the new state power: the Anti-fascist Council as the supreme legislative and executive body and the Anti-fascist Committee with the attributes of a provisional government. The Congress completed its historic task by proclaiming the principle of «building a new democratic Albania according to the will of the people, while prohibiting the return of the former King Zog to Albania», and deciding, beforehand, «not to recognize any other government which might be set up inside or outside the country against the will of the Albanian people».¹ Thus the Congress of Përmet was the crowning achievement which marked the end of a stage.

It must not be forgotten that, in order to arrive at this point, a stern and protracted struggle, not only on the battlefield but also in field of politics and diplomacy, had been waged. Many ambushes and traps were laid on the road to the victory of our people's revolution. Among them were the plans and attempts that were made to solve the problem of state power outside the country. To follow the thread of these plans and attempts means to relate all the complexity of the situations through which our revolution has passed, means to analyse the

1 «Documents of the supreme organs of national liberation revolutionary power (1942-1944)», Tirana 1962, document No. 36, pp. 144-145. (Alb. ed.).

historical significance of some of the basic decisions of the Congress of Përmet, that sealed the failure of these plans and attempts once and for all.

Naturally when this problem is spoken of, British policy is the first to come under examination. What, then, was the attitude of the British government in regard to the creation of a «government in exile» also for Albania? No clear-cut answer can be given to this: It cannot be said that the British were always, and *apriori*, for the formation of such a government. Likewise it cannot be said that they did not make any attempts at all to this end.

Let us take, for example, the period immediately after the occupation of Albania. Even though Zog fled ignominiously, he tried to retain an appearance of «legality», a kind of «constitutional continuity». Several days after the aggression he remembered to send a half-hearted protest to the League of Nations in his capacity as «King of the Albanians», a protest that was easily sidetracked in the organized wilderness of the procedure of that organization. For quite a while he maintained (with salary and other expenses) some three «legations»: in Washington with Faik Konica at the head (until the latter's death in December 1942), in Cairo and Ankara. He also kept on hand a so-called secretariat which was necessary to permit Zog to keep his «royal distance». He rarely went to meetings himself, nor did he ordinarily sign letters or telegrams. The «Master of the Household» Sotir Martini, appeared on his behalf. Ryan (who had seen this person in days of «glory» as well as in bad times) used to say that he had adequate qualities as a majordomo, a lackey,

but none for state affairs. This was Zog's entire entourage.

When Zog came and settled in England, in June 1940, he of course, submitted to the restriction placed on him, however, as we have seen, at first he did not fail to make some attempt to escape oblivion, to remind his hosts of his rank and title. Once he sought an audience with the king of England, «to thank him for his hospitality», then he dropped his price and asked for a talk with the prime minister or with the Foreign Secretary. He found the door closed everywhere.

Perhaps it is necessary to explain why the British maintained such a disdainful attitude even after fascist Italy entered the war against them. Why for example, did not they create an «Albanian Government» in exile with Zog at its head when they were keeping so many kings and heads of state in London? It seems to us that Dixon gives the clearest explanation for this in one of his reports of the year 1942 in which he makes a kind of historical summary of Britain's position on the question of Zog: «King Zog is, so to speak, a victim of the appeasement policy: had the Italians invaded Albania *after* they declared war on Great Britain King Zog would no doubt have been received in this country as an honoured guest on a par with other Monarchs fleeing from countries overrun by the Axis.»¹ However it turned out otherwise, Albania was occupied a year earlier and, Dixon continues, «...we found it con-

¹ Report of P. Dixon dated 10.VII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33110.

venient, when he fled the country, to recognise the Italian annexation, and, implicitly to accept the Italian valuation of King Zog as an unsatisfactory ruler.¹ It is important to stress this latter statement, because it is interesting to hear from the mouth of Foreign Office functionaries that, in their verdict on a tyrannical ruler like Zog, no account at all was taken of the opinion of an entire people, but they simply echoed what the fascist propaganda said.

Here, of course, this must be added: Since in the summer of 1940, British policy wanted to remain «free from any kind of obligation to restore Albania as an independent state», it could not be for the formation of an Albanian government either. From what we have said above, we now know that, in the late summer of 1940, there was talk in London about the creation first of an «Albanian office» at the Foreign Office, then of an «Albanian Central Committee» with branches in other countries.² However these projects remained on paper and did not indicate any change in the «principle of the non-commitment» of British policy to the Albanian question, because they had been thought of as entirely unofficial organizations. This meant that they could not be seen as preparatory steps towards the formation of a government in the proper sense.

The first attempt for an Albanian government is that which was made after the beginning of the Greek-Italian War. The question arose in connection with the plan for the organization of the upris-

¹ *Ibid.*

² See above.

ing in the northern regions. As we have seen, the plan was discussed in two variants: The one revolved around Zog, the other around Gani Kryeziu. The fact cannot go unnoticed that when it was proposed to Zog that he should go to the vicinity of the front, it was stressed to him that the British side assumed no commitment to restore him to the Albanian throne. Indeed some had the idea that he should go there simply as a «rebel leader», and should renounce the title of king and resume the old title of «bey».¹

With Gani Kryeziu it was different. Here the essential part of the scheme of the uprising in the north was the formation of a «provisional government» which would also have the support of the British Government. This was not to be a «government of one colour»; it was thought of as a «coalition government», with the participation of «various political forces». Apart from leading the uprising in the country, the Kryeziu brothers also had to bring «a more widely representative basis» to the government.²

As far as emerges from the Foreign Office documents, this is the only attempt at the creation of an Albanian government, which clearly bear the British hallmark throughout the Second World War. And if it was not achieved, this was not through the «fault» of the British, but due to the categoric opposition of Athens, which was against the formation of *any kind of Albanian government* (be this an off-

¹ PRO-FO/371, File No. 24867.

² *Ibid.*

spring of British policy), because it saw this, too, as a «potential obstacle» to the realization of its plan, if not to seize the entire Albanian territory, at least to cut the southern regions from it. From that time on, the Foreign Office takes this as its own position on the more general problem of the future of Albania, as well as on the partial problem of the «Albanian Government» in exile.

However, even in these circumstances entirely unfavourable to Zog, they did not want to reject him altogether. Those responsible in the Southern Department and Assistant Secretary O. Sargent, personally, were always of the opinion that «he might be useful for future plans in connection with Albania, especially in view of the possibility of German intervention in the Balkans». Therefore the line on how to treat him was «that he must be kept in warm storage»¹. So that he would not think they had abandoned him, it was decided to make a few «gestures of encouragement» in his direction. He was told that he could publish an interview in the big newspaper. «The Daily Telegraph»², moreover there was talk of his meeting the Prime Minister Churchill, or the Foreign Secretary Eden. At the begin-

1 This formula is often encountered in the documents of January-February 1941. See especially the note of P. Dixon dated 9.I.1941, PRO-FO/371. File No. 29711 as well as note dated 28.I.1941, and his report dated 11.II.1941. PRO-FO/371. File No. 29709.

2 Above note of P. Dixon dated 3.I.1941, and his explanatory note for A. Eden dated 22.I.1941, PRO-FO/371. File No. 29711.

ning of January 1941, this idea was baked up especially by the S.O.E, whose representatives asked, in the weekly meetings that they had at the Foreign Office, that «It would be useful if the Secretary of State could spare ten minutes to see him.»¹ This of course was done not simply to respond to the desires that Zog repeated insistently, but because they always hoped «to make use of him (Zog) later, particularly if things go badly in Albania».² However with the turn that events took in the Balkans, these things were left in obedience again.

Several months later, the problem of the «representation of Albania abroad» came up again. This time it was Zog, himself, who started the ball rolling. At the end of September 1941, he sent Prime Minister Churchill, as well as all the Allied governments a «note» on the occasion of the coming meeting of «nations united in the war against fascism» that was to be held in Washington.³ In this «note» he claimed openly for the first time that he remained the «legal ruler» of Albania and that the «Albanian Government», headed by him, had not ceased to exist after April 7, 1939. He needed this reasoning as a support for his request to send his representatives to the forthcoming interallied conference. Needless

1 See note of P. Dixon dated 4.II.1941, PRO-FO/371. File No. 29709.

2 Above report of P. Dixon dated 11.II.1941. *Ibid.* See also the summary report of R. Bowker dated 25.II.1941, PRO-FO/371. File No. 29718.

3 Copy of Zog's note to Prime Minister Churchill, dated 23.IX.1941, PRO-FO/371. File No. 29711.

to say, in Zog's plans the question of recognition of Albania as a «nation united in the anti-fascist war» was not separated from that of his restoration to the «throne» which he had left. His whole aim was to prepare the conditions from abroad, at that time, in order to usurp power again in the post-war Albania.

What is worth mentioning here is not so much the negative answer (which was known from the start), as a minor incident that occurred between Churchill and Eden in connection with the tone of this reply. A first draft, compiled in the Foreign Office, the prime minister considered very severe and sent back with a marginal note that «he would not sign such letters».¹ It is difficult to say whether or not Churchill had some specific ideas of his own for making use of Zog in the future, or whether his gesture simply expressed the deep veneration he had for any «royal majesty». However it is a fact that Eden was forced to draw up a special report in which he explained that Zog's pretention to come out as the lawful representative of Albania, as well as his claim that an Albanian Government existed in London, must receive a clear and blunt reply that would serve as a «model for the other Allied Governments», which had also received «similar letters».² Eden stated very clearly what the viewpoint

¹ A report for Secretary A. Eden with an illegible signature, dated 26.X.1941, PRO-FO/371. File No. 29711.

² Report of A. Eden for Prime Minister Churchill, dated 31.X.1941, PRO-FO/371. File No. 29711.

of the Foreign Office was on this question at the end of 1941. «There is no Albanian Government here to recognize and no material to form such a government, and even if there were it would be representative of nothing.» He stated the reasons for such a stand with equal clarity, when he stressed that «We have always declined to be drawn into any commitment regarding the future of Albania, since the Greeks and Yugoslavs have strong views which in due course will have to be taken into account.»¹

It cannot go unremarked that this is at a time when Zog is making some efforts to emerge from isolation. His intentions are not in the least to oppose British policy to which he is firmly bound. A brief note by Dixon, after a visit which S. Martini made to the Foreign Office in connection with the above «note», is very significant. He says there that Zog's emissary «seemed like a child who had done something very wrong» and had come seeking forgiveness rather than a reply.² Hence it is clear that Zog was only seeking to impose himself on the attention of the Foreign Office in some way, to suggest to it indirectly that it should shift from its stagnation, and take new initiatives on the Albanian question, which would, of course, have him as the pivot. In the Southern Department they were asking one another what could have happened to make him display such «enterprise». The answer was that,

¹ Report of A. Eden for Prime Minister Churchill, dated 31.X.1941, PRO-FO/371. File No. 29711.

² Note of P. Dixon dated 14.I.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33109.

with the spread of the flames of the war throughout the entire world in the summer and autumn of 1941, with two more powers — the USSR and the USA — coming out on the field to battle, with the «colossal reshuffle of the cards» in the play of politics on a world-wide scale, Zog judged that the situation might allow him to take a hand too.¹

There is also an «Albanian» factor that must be added: A movement had begun even in the ranks of the Albanian emigrants.

This refers first of all, to the «cream» of the political emigrants in Britain and the USA. In London there was the «anti-Zogist» group of BBC, headed by Tajar Zavalani who was in charge of the Albanian broadcast of the BBC. They, and Tajar in particular, were not the kind of people to be satisfied with the role of a speaker, a simple announcer. They dreamed of a political career, and the BBC could serve as a good springboard. It is no exaggeration to say that we have the impression that the Albanian crew of BBC hoped deep within themselves to play, of course within the dimensions of Albania, a role similar to that of General De Gaulle, who, precisely from the microphones of the BBC issued the call for a «Free France». This explains why Tajar involved himself in activity that went far beyond the bounds of the BBC. On the one hand, he tried to increase his broadcast from 5 minutes to 10 and sought permission to close it with the words «Rroftë Shqipëria e pavarur» (Long live independent Albania). On the other hand, he sent letters

¹ Note of P. Dixon. *Ibid.*

to influential personalities, even to Prime Minister Churchill himself.¹ He wrote articles in newspapers and periodicals in which he demanded a commitment of British policy to the future of Albania.² However this voice also joined the others to be lost in the desert. Even persons like Tajar, who had identified themselves with British policy and had pledged their souls to the «ideals of western democracy», could not break through the wall of silence and disdain that surrounded the Albanian problem in London. From time to time the Foreign Office reacted angrily, as Knight did in January 1941, when he wrote about a letter that Tajar had sent to Eden on January 23: «BBC announcers should stick to their job,³ and not meddle in politics.

On the other side of the Atlantic, in the USA, the number of emigrants was very much greater and the picture, of course, more confused. However all the political activity revolved around names like Faik Konica, Kosta Çekrezi, etc. We can judge this activity here only to the extent that the British documents present it to us, on the basis of the reports of the British Embassy in Washington and the cor-

¹ Sometimes Tajar put his wife, Selmane, to work. She, too wrote letters in a pathetic style (we saw a letter of hers addressed to Prime Minister Churchill, in July 1941), in order to move the «political Lords» with her supplications from the troubled heart of a woman «who had left her motherland». PRO-FO/371. File No. 29711.

² A special sheaf of documents of January-February was opened for «these political intuitives of T. Zavalani».

³ Note of V. Knight dated 5.II.1941. *Ibid.*

respondence with the groups of emigrants in London that was intercepted by the censor. Tajar kept in contact with Çekrezi who, with the «Free Albania Movement», claimed to be the extreme «left» wing of the political line-up of the Albanian emigrants in the USA. Zog, of course, communicated with Konica, who combined the duty as Zog's «minister» in America with that of President of «Vatra». Noli kept aloof from all of them, uninvolved in the «struggle of parties» with the prestige derived from his past fame and his position as patriarch of the church.

From autumn 1941, the idea that their squabbles should be put aside, that a united front of all the Albanians abroad should be created, and concrete steps taken for the formation of a government in exile, began to gain ground among emigrant circles of all shades. This conviction gradually grew stronger with the arrival of news from Albania that spoke of an increasing activity of the «guerrillas». Everyone, without exception, both the political speculators and those that were in good faith, thought that the fate of Albania would be decided, as before, at the round tables of diplomacy, in the major capitals, especially London and Washington. Everyone was ready to applaud the struggle of the «brave lads of Albania» against the foreign occupiers. However the predominant opinion was that the «half-dozen rifles» that would be fired in Albania would not settle the matter. It was they, the experienced politicians, with their ability and connections who had to emerge as masters of the fate of the Homeland. The plans that were being made to partition or amputate parts of the Albanian territory

were not unknown. The systematic silence that was being maintained in London, in this «headquarters of the Allied policy», in connection with the future of Albania, was very eloquent in itself. Hence timely measures had to be taken. There had to be an organized movement of the Albanians abroad, a committee, or better still, a government, which would represent the interests of Albania, both during the war as well as at the end of it, at the Peace Settlement. That this could be done inside the country — apparently this was an eventuality that was not taken into account at all.

For a while the various trends among the emigrants considered making Zog the common denominator of the movement for the creation of a representative Albanian organ abroad. The reasoning in this case was formally juridical and, in fact, constituted a recrudescence of the old principle of «legitimacy», characteristic of the law of the feudal epoch. According to them, Zog was all that remained of the independent Albanian state «as the constitutional representative of Albania»,¹ that had to serve as a guarantee, not only of the restoration of its independence, but also of the inviolability of its borders. All this was based on the demagogical manoeuvre or the naive belief that juridical fictions had decisive importance in the eyes of the statesmen of the «western world», that they could annual the considerations of current policy.

Under these circumstances Zog hastened to stake

¹ See report of P. Dixon on conversation with T. Zavalani, dated 3.VII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33109.

his claim. In March 1942, he had two consecutive meetings with A. Ryan (the first on the 11th and the second on the 20th), in which he openly put forward his demand «to be recognized as the Head of the State and leader of Albanians abroad and claims that he is in a similar position of the refugee kings of Greece and Yugoslavia».¹

In connection with this P. Dixon wrote, in the first week of April: «The thing that strikes me is that during these two conversations, the first between Sir A. Ryan and King Zog since last September, the King came out much more into the open in regard to his own claims as ruler of Albania than he has ever done in the past.»² «He has not been given any encouragement to take this line,» Dixon added.³

In June-July of 1942, Zog had one or two other conversations with Ryan that the Foreign Office did not like very much.⁴ He mentioned, first of all, two resolutions of the «Balkan Committee» on Albania,

1 Notation of R. Meade dated 1.IV.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33110. In the conversation of March 11, Zog argued the «legal continuity» of his position with this banality: «Albania had been a duly constituted state, of which he was the lawful head. When the Italians invaded it, he had assembled Parliament and put the situation to them. They had left it to him to decide what should be done. He had left the country for the reasons stated above, but he remained the head of the state and was, as such, entitled to represent it.» See report of March 11, 1942, by A. Ryan.

2 Note of P. Dixon dated 7.IV.1942. *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 Reports of A. Ryan on conversations with Zog dated 24.VI.1942, and 4.VII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33110.

that had been sent to him by the chairman of the committee, E. Boyle, personally. This committee, which included a number of British personalities connected with the countries of the Balkan Peninsula, was an unofficial organization about which in the Foreign Office they pointed out its «anti-Greek orientation» on the one hand, and its support for «Bulgarian interests», on the other hand (sic!). In its first resolution the committee expressed itself in favour of the independence of Albania, while in the second, it appealed to the Albanians to unite around Zog.¹ In referring to this resolution, Zog left unmentioned another fact, that the activity of the committee had been «inspired» by himself, through General Percy and R. Hodgson,² who were members of the committee and also in direct contact with the Chairman E. Boyle. In a letter in the middle of May, that is, on the eve of the meeting of the committee, S. Martini wrote to E. Boyle that, if he helped Zog, he would have «all his gratitude in the future Albania».³

It was precisely the «Balkan Committee» that Zog used as his reason to urge the need for a government, headed by himself, more insistently than at any other time. He complained to Ryan that he

1 The relations of Zog with the «Balkan Committee» and its «Chairman» E. Boyle are reflected in a number of documents of the second half of May 1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33111.

2 R. Hodgson had been British Minister to Albania before A. Ryan.

3 Letter of S. Martini addressed to E. Boyle dated 15.V.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33111.

was under constant pressure, that accusations were being made against him from all sides of remaining idle and not doing as much as he should for his country. That is why he had begun consultations for the formation of an «Albanian national government». His idea was that the «government» in question could be made up of six members, with its centre in London, while some local committees could be established in the Albanian colonies in the USA, Turkey and Egypt. He also informed Ryan that the main «internal» obstacles could be considered overcome, since he had secured the approval of F. Konica and some other personalities of decisive influence in the ranks of the Albanian emigrants. Now it only remained to obtain the approval of the British Government, since it was clear to him that no action of this kind could be undertaken in opposition to its will. If publicly given approval was asking too much, he would be satisfied with an «unofficial blessing».¹

From the pile of documents that have to do with this matter, it appears that it was dealt with at nearly all the levels of the Foreign Office, from the officials of the Southern Department up to the assistant secretaries O. Sargent and A. Cadogan and even Eden himself. The «concrete but decisive» answer was that «His Majesty's Government» considered

1 This opened up a whole lot of work in the Southern Department of the Foreign Office at the end of June or the beginning of July 1942, with thoughts of P. Dixon, D. Howard and O. Sargent. See especially the summary of Dixon on the problems that emerge from the Ryan-Zog conversation of June 24; the report is dated 25.VI.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33109.

Zog's activities as entirely «inopportune»¹. Besides that, at a meeting at the Foreign Office with Sargent, the Chairman of the Balkan Committee E. Boyle, was severely reprimanded and advised that «the Committee would consult the Foreign Office before they took up delicate questions such as the Albanian one».²

A thing that strikes the eye now is that the British are beginning, ever more frequently, to ask what is going on inside Albania. They ask this question when it comes to defining their stand towards Zog. «Well,» they say, «Zog might unite the Albanians abroad but what can be said about all those who are fighting inside the country? Would you say British policy will win or lose if it clings to Zog as a main figure in the Albanian question?» Because one thing comes out clearly, that even in London they sense that «the fighters of the anti-Italian resistance in Albania are anti-Zogists». But who are these «anti-Zogist fighters concretely?» In a notation at the beginning of August, another functionary of the Southern Department R. Meade, allows us to judge how well informed they were at the Foreign Office on the internal situation in Albania at this time, when he tells us that «The principal guerrilla activities appear to be conducted by Muharrem Bajraktari, who from his record would appear to be an opponent of King Zog.»³

1 Notation of P. Dixon dated 26.VII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33110.

2 Report of O. Sargent on conversation with E. Boyle dated 15.VII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33110.

3 Notation of R. Meade dated 4.VIII.1942 on conversation of A. Ryan with Zog on 25.VII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33110.

From this emerges another valuable indication: of course the British are ready to forsake Zog and exchange him, but... with another like Zog, with Muharrem Bajraktari and company. Dixon, again at the beginning of August, states quite openly what the calculations of the Foreign Office might be: «If it is decided at some future date to alter our attitude towards Albania, it will be for reasons not connected with King Zog, e.g. the emergence of some favourable leader or party within the country, or a rising spirit of revolt owing to connections with General Mihailovic in Yugoslavia.»¹ We shall see that lacking «chicken», they will turn to crow again, when it becomes clear that their schemes do not work out and they are incapable of finding another solution.

¹ Notation of P. Dixon dated 4.VIII.1942. *Ibid.*

UNISON AND DISCORD IN THE RANKS OF THE ALBANIAN EMIGRANTS

Meanwhile there was no end to the wheeling and dealing among the emigrants over the creation of a government. It is important to clear up in particular, how true was Zog's claim, in his meeting with Ryan, that he now had the backing of the united front of the leading colonies of Albanians abroad, especially in America.

We said above, that a kind of movement had begun. To be more precise, this was not a homogeneous movement which would strive in a conscious and systematic way to achieve the objective that it had set itself. Its components were too contradictory. Hence we could speak more of a certain sentiment, a spiritual state, and it is precisely this sentiment, this spiritual state, with its ups and downs, with its turns and about-turns, that Zog hastens to make use of.

There are two who emerge at this time as the most pledged to the smoothing out of differences for the creation of a «united front» of the emigrants, with Zog at the head: Faik Konica across the Atlantic and Tajar Zavalani on this side. But each goes about it in his own way.

The terribly confused personality of F. Konica emerges once again. His culture and erudition are only superficial, whereas money has enslaved him to the point that any national or illuminist ideal is pushed into second or third place. Faik has undertaken the task of «organizing the movement with Zog at the head» in the USA. He has pledged himself especially to bring Zog the decisive vote of Noli in favour of creating a government.

At the end of July, in a letter that he writes to S. Martini (he preferred to write letters addressed to the «king» in the «diplomatic language», in French, and not in his own language), he says that Noli could be considered as theirs, but... (and here comes the proposition), «gift of several thousands of dollars should be sent to him to protect him from the whims of the multitude which might force him, later, to adopt a stand different from that he maintains now.» Konica goes on to say how this should be done so that it would not upset Noli, «It is better to make the gift discretely accompanying it with a letter from the king, which should say that this sum is for the bishop's private charities.»¹

However Konica is really a slave of money,

¹ Letter of F. Konica to S. Martini at the end of July 1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33111.

but not of the king; he is not afraid to issue a stern warning; «There is only one thing wrong,» he states, «that might cause the failure of the whole movement: that Zog should promise and not keep his word, as he is accustomed to. This is the way he has done with me, that he has left me without any money.»¹

At the beginning of November, apparently thinking, that the «movement» has made great progress, Konica announces that he agrees to be the «unofficial representative» of Zog in Washington. And again takes the opportunity to ask for money for himself and for others («the 400 pounds a month you send me is not enough because the cost of living has gone up steeply».)² This is as far as Konica got, because he died suddenly in the middle of December 1942. They say that at the funeral ceremony there was a wreath ordered by Zog from London, for which — as the people of «Vatra» were to testify later — he never payed.

For his part Tajar Zavalani comes out, we should say, as the most perfect example of a social democrat that an Albanian environment has ever produced. He also has the «adequate preparation»: he has covered the whole distance from Marxism to vulgar bourgeois liberalism. At first he brags to the British that he was twice in Zog's jails. He presents himself as an implacable opponent of this autocratic

¹ *Ibid.*

² Letter of F. Konica at the beginning of November 1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33111.

monarch.¹ At the same time, he does not omit to express his admiration for the institutions of the country in which he has found refuge. At the end of March 1941, in a letter which he sends to a British personality at Oxford, Sir Charles Bentinck, he suggests that at the end of the war, there should be a king at the head of Albania again but a king from the royal court of England.²

From the beginning of the year 1942, Tajar, too, is involved in the «activities» in connection with the formation of the «government». Now he refers to the «supreme interests of the Homeland» in order to put aside «differences of principle» and enter the «United Front». In January, together with a group of Albanians living in London, including a mixture of Zogists and non-Zogists, he goes to the «Ritz» Hotel to look into the possibility of publishing an «Albanian bulletin». On the instructions of «His Majesty» the relevant prospectus is drawn up a few days later, but Zog sends it to the Foreign Office, which vetoes it and the project remains on paper.³ Still in January, at a meeting in the Foreign Office, Tajar says that the «Albanians generally supported King Zog but not the former members of his government» (?)⁴ At the beginning of July, in another talk

1 Report of R. Meade dated 19.I.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33109.

2 Letter of T. Zavalani addressed to Sir Charles Bentinck (KCMG) at Oxford at the end of March 1941, PRO-FO/371. File No. 29714.

3 Letter of a group of Albanians of London addressed to Zog in January 1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33110.

4 Above report of R. Meade dated 19.I.1942.

with Dixon, with whom he now has frequent contacts, he asks for British support for the creation of a «provisional government» headed by Zog as a «constitutional representative of Albania.»¹

In November things take another turn. Now that it is decided to make the declaration on Albania, at the Foreign Office they think about Zog once more and are even ready to call him back on the scene. Sensing what is in the wind, Zog asks that his «minister» S. Martini, be permitted to deliver a message of greetings in his name, directed to the Albanians on November 28, independence day, from BBC. The Foreign Office accepts this and the speech is sent to the BBC.² But when word leaks out there on what is being prepared, the members of the editorial staff of the Albanian broadcast, headed by T. Zavalani, give notice that they are going to resign. The British editor Kirkpatrick, together with Dixon try in vain to break their resistance. They propose to Tajar that he, too, deliver a speech, as a representative of the «anti-Zogist trend» in order to establish a «balance», while Martini is asked to shorten and amend his speech. Tajar proves stubborn and the British naturally, prefer to abandon Martini's speech rather than close down the Albanian broadcast of BBC.³

At the beginning of December, T. Zavalani and his group send a letter directly to the Foreign Se-

1 Report of P. Dixon on conversation with T. Zavalani dated 3.VII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33109.

2 Notation of P. Dixon dated 23.XI.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33107.

3 Notation of P. Dixon dated 28.XI.1942, *Ibid.*

cretary Eden, in which, while they appeal for the reaffirmation of Albania's independence, they underline that recognition of Zog «in any capacity at all», would be a grave mistake on the part of the British Government.¹ Naturally one reason for this is that T. Zavalani has returned to the stand of a strict anti-Zogist, but the British documents do not tell us anything. Nevertheless, one thing they do verify is that they in no way write Zog off at the Foreign Office, and indeed are even ready to protect him when others attack him. Dixon considers it disturbing, «Zavalani and Logoreci have informed us in writing of their opposition to King Zog. These two men are employed in the BBC and we ought to make sure that their political sentiments are not affecting their output.» This is because «at present the policy is silence about Zog, no criticism», concludes Dixon.²

After the declarations that were made in December 1942, by the three powers of the anti-fascist coalition on the independence of Albania after the war, naturally the movement of the emigrants for «unity», «organization», and a «government» assumed a new impetus. However precisely at this time, when it was thought they had only to reach out to pick the fruit, the contradictions emerged with particular force. A bitter struggle brought the champions of the «holy union» following Zog into

1 Letter of T. Zavalani and his group addressed to A. Eden dated 7.XII.1942, PRO-FO/371. File No. 33109.

2 Notation of P. Dixon dated 13.XII.1942, PRO-FO/371, File No. 33109.

confrontation with the group of the anti-Zogist «republican democrats» in England and America.

The idea of creating a «government in exile» found its greatest support in the circles of «Vatra» and the newspaper «Dielli» of Boston. «The spiritual heritage» of Konica was felt even after his death in the elements furthest to the right among the Albanian emigrants in the USA. It can be said without exaggeration that, if Zog still entertained hopes and continued his efforts to regain power a little longer, this was due, in the first place, to the response that his «initiatives» had among these circles in America.¹

Both from some documents that we have mentioned above, and from copies of other correspondence intercepted by the British censor, it comes out clearly that misuse was made of the name of Noli in order to achieve such an aim. As he himself was to admit later, Noli, also, had some illusions. The environment around him, his complete detachment from our reality, his anxiety over the plans to liquidate the independence and shorten the borders of the country, naturally did their work, and Noli could not orient himself, could not distinguish where the true salvation of Albania lay. There were moments when

1 This matter is broadly reflected especially in two files of 1943, PRO-FO/371 «Albania 1943». Files No 37136, 37137. A considerable number of telegrams and letters exchanged between the «representatives» of the Albanians of America and the small group of emigrants established in London, intercepted by the British censor, as well as the correspondence of the Foreign Office with the British Embassy in Washington, are included there.

he thought that the formula of a «legal Albania» was a striking discovery that could mix up the cards of the chauvinist circles in neighbouring countries and western powers that stood behind them. But on the other hand, it is a fact that, despite certain inconsistencies, he never accepted the repeated proposals that Zog made to him from London up till the end of 1943, to place himself at the head of the «royal government».¹ Besides that, there is another fact which makes Noli's stand clearer. One year later he was to learn of the formation of the democratic government from the ranks of our National Liberation Movement. Then his temporary waverings and aberrations were to come to an end. Since (we speak of his weaknesses, we also must recognize this merit) once in contact with the reality of the country he shook himself up, opened his eyes, and was among the first to send a telegram to the Prime Minister of Britain Churchill, seeking recognition of the democratic government in December of 1944.²

The anti-Zogist trend in the ranks of the Albanian emigrants is represented more and more by the two names Çekrezi-Zavalani. It is understandable that the activity of the latter finds more extensive reflection in the British documents. From the time of the turn it made at the end of 1942, Tajar's group shows a tendency to a certain individuality of its own, to avoid merging in the ranks of the «United

1 Noli's telegram dated 24.XII.1943, intercepted by British censor, PRO-FO/371. File No. 37136.

2 Noli's telegram addressed to Prime Minister Churchill in December 1944, PRO-FO/371 «Albania 1944». File No. 43664.

Front» headed by Zog, against whom it tries to draw a clearer line of demarcation. One reason for its «radicalization» could have been the very stand of Zog who described the members of this group as «too young, and inexperienced», and appealed for their activities be treated with «coolness», if not with disdain.¹

However, the main cause must be sought elsewhere. Tajar and company thought that now the time had come to convince the British that they were the core of the «young Albanian leading class» that represented the only alternative to the antiquated Zogists acceptable to British policy on Albania. Of all the emigrants, Tajar was without doubt the one who had managed to establish the most direct contacts with distinguished figures in public life and with the official circles of the British capital. As an employee of the BBC he gradually became «more on the inside» not only in the Ministry of Information, but also in the Foreign Office. There is evidence that, particularly from the year 1943, he tried very hard to become the «trusted man» of the Foreign Office on the Albanian question. And in fact, from that time until the end of the war, there is a considerable number of «confidential» reports that he presented on various problems, ranging from reports on the differences in the ranks of the Albanian emigrants to projects on the «economic reconstruction of Albania after the war», with spe-

1 See letter of S. Martini addressed to Noli dated 7.IV.1943, PRO-FO/371 Albania 1943. File No. 37136.

cial emphasis on the possibilities for investments of British capital there.¹

As the person most in the confidence of the political circles in London, Tajar could not fail to have the best knowledge of their mood, desires and attitudes. For example, he sensed that even after Eden's declaration in the House of Commons in December 1942, they were not for the creation of an Albanian Government at the Foreign Office. This is how D. Laskey, another functionary of the Southern Department, who was engaged from 1943 with the Albanian question, formulated the position of the Foreign Office on this matter in January 1943:

«The declaration (that of December 17, 1942) must be interpreted to mean that we will endeavour to restore an independent Albania after the war, but not that we recognize an independent Albanian state as now existing.» Therefore, continued Laskey, «we do not interpret the declaration to mean that we are forced to recognize any Free Albanian Government in exile.»²

What is hidden behind this definition in principle was to come out very clearly in the course of the handling of the problem in the subsequent documents. Although they were committed to re-

1 See, for example, a lengthy «project» of T. Zavalani on the economic reconstruction of Albania in PRO-FO/371. «Albania 1944». File No. 43569.

2 Notation of D.S. Laskey on a conversation with R. Hodgson dated 8.1.1943, PRO-FO/371. File No. 37136. Also see letter of Southern Department addressed to the British Embassy in Washington dated 22.1.1943. *Ibid.*

cognizing the independence of Albania, the British still wanted to retain freedom of action on the Albanian question. They thought that recognition of any kind of Albanian Government in exile could tie their hands to some extent, whether in regard to future transactions over borders, or in connection with the project, which still existed, of the «federation» or the «Balkan confederacy»¹. Here matters remain almost as at the time of the Ambassadors' Conference in 1913, at which the great powers of that time wanted to create the Albanian state *ex novo* (from the beginning) with its borders, international status and even its internal regime, solely as the outcome of agreement among themselves, regardless of any factor within the country.

This explains the totally negative stand of the British on the question of the Albanian Government. For the time being, not only did they not encourage the creation of a government, but they regarded any effort that might be made to this end with suspicion. The exchange of letters between Zog and Noli seems to have aroused some concern at the Foreign Office, especially when they heard of the alternative of creating a government headed by Noli and when there was talk of a trip by Zog himself to the USA at that time. Apparently convinced that this was an attempt to sidestep them by forming an Albanian Government in exile on the territory of the

1 In February 1943 D. Laskey wrote that «we still hope that Albania might enter into a confederacy with Greece or (sic!) with Yugoslavia». PRO-FO/371. File No. 33118.

USA, the British were placated only when they received assurances from the State Department that «the American Government had views identical with those of His Majesty's Government on this matter.»¹

Later, it seems that the view of the Foreign Office underwent a certain evolution. In the spring of 1943, T. Zavalani was told unofficially, in confidence, that the «Allied governments would prefer to recognize a kind of Albanian National Committee, rather than a regular government». That the Foreign Office was now inclined to make a kind of concession, this was to come out also from a report that Laskey was to draw up a little later, in the summer of 1943. «Moreover, a Government in exile would undoubtedly give us a great deal of trouble. The same objections would not necessarily apply to a National Committee and it might be worth our while to consider recognizing such a body.»²

Tajar and the group of «young men» made this viewpoint their own. They were the ones who raised their voices among the emigrants for «more moderate projects», for the creation of a «Free Albania Committee» instead of a government, a committee that would still have Zog at its head. This solution was embraced by the «republicans» the more, be-

1 The Southern Department had exchanged letters several times on this matter with the British Embassy in Washington in January-February 1943. See especially the letter of the British Embassy's reply dated 22.II.1943, PRO-FO/371. File No. 37136.

2 Report of D. Laskey dated 17.VIII.1943, PRO-FO/371. File No. 37137.

cause besides the advantage of being to the British taste, it also had the advantage, according to them, that it gave certain «guarantees» against Zog in the future. Whereas a ready-made government could hand over to Zog the keys of state power in the Albania of the future (how lightly they still thought of it from London!), the committee, as a provisional body, would undoubtedly raise the problem of the post-war regime again.

T. Zavalani must have written to Zog around April or May 1943, about the plan for the formation of a «united front of all trends», but with the committee as a governing and representative centre. We do not have Tajar's letter, but the copy of Zog's reply dated May 11, 1943, is in the Foreign Office files.¹ This, too, of course, is a letter written on behalf of the «king» by S. Martini, but its cold and indeed reproving and disdainful tone strikes the eye. Zog reacts sharply against the «committee» which he calls «suicide». By insisting on the so-called legal government, which he presents as a guarantee of the independence and territorial integrity of Albania, he tries to appear as if he is concerned about the interests of the country. However «legality» for him has never been anything more than a trick that he needed to hide his greed for personal power. He nurtured hopes that history would repeat itself and, as in the distant December of 1924, he would climb on the backs of the Albanian people again, imposed

1 Copy of S. Martini's letter to T. Zavalani dated 11.V.1943, in English translation (also intercepted by the British censors), PRO-FO/371. File No. 37137.

by the superior foreign interests of America or Britain.

In the Foreign Office documents we saw no more of the correspondence that was carried on later between Zog and the «opposition». However there is a confidential report there by T. Zavalani, at the end of October 1943, addressed to the chief of the Political Intelligence Department at the Foreign Office Miss Barker.¹ The report was sent after an appointment that Tajar had with Miss Barker, possibly at the latter's request. This can be seen as a proof of what was said above, that Tajar was becoming the main confidant from Albanian circles for certain officials of the Foreign Office. And in reality, the report begins with the author pleading that «...it is intended that these documents should be used in the most confidential way... As we have verbally agreed you will be kind enough to inform in a purely private way about these proceedings the official concerned at the Foreign Office.»²

It goes without saying that the main value of the report lies elsewhere. We find in it a summary of the development of the situation in the ranks of the Albanian emigrants from the end of 1942, in which «the united front of all Albanians in the free countries,» their unity and their division, always emerges as the main theme.

T. Zavalani describes events in these words: «Up to the last weeks (the report is dated October

¹ T. Zavalani's letter to Miss Baker dated 24.X.1943, PRO-FO/371. File No. 37137.

² *Ibid.*

24, 1943) Zog had stubbornly refused to enter with the Albanians abroad into any sort of compromise regarding his future position in Liberated Albania. He hoped that he would obtain an unrestricted recognition from the Allies and be asked to form a Government in exile as legal head of the State. This situation has changed since Faik Konica died and Fan Noli refused to take part officially in Albanian politics... Thus the organization of the Albanian colony in the U.S.A. known as VATRA, which supports Zog unconditionally was deprived of the two prominent leaders on whom Zog could rely.»¹

After he stressed that «some official hints let us understand that the Allied Governments would preferably recognize some sort of Albanian National Committee than a regular Government», T. Zavalani stated that «Here we found ourselves in a vicious circle... Part of these Albanians (in the free countries) led by VATRA... insist on the unconditional acceptance of Zog as King.» «Here then,» continues Tajar, «is the dilemma for us Albanian democrats.» In principle they, too, were for a committee since only in this way «...would leave full latitude to the Albanians to choose the form of regime and the Government they desire after liberation». However something had to be done «in order to come out of the deadlock». And here we learn from Tajar's report what happened later. «The Annual Convention of Free Albania unanimously decided in June last (1943) to enter the United Front with Zog, under a written

¹ *Ibid.*

programme in which his position towards the Albanian people should be clearly stated.»¹

Apparently Zog accepted the demand of the «opposition» for a compromise. As a result, it was decided to form a committee in London composed of Zogist and anti-Zogist representatives, to draft a program of the «United Front», in which the point in connection with the creation of the «government» would have to be conditioned by Zog pledging himself to take into consideration the will of a national assembly after the war in regard to the form of the regime. The «Committee» referred to must have done a great deal of beating the air, because, as Tajar says in his report, despite the drafting of an agreed text, in October both parties still had reservations; the amendments, proposals and counter proposals continued from one side as much as from the other and Zog always guarded against taking any step that could be interpreted as though he were ready to step aside. Tajar sought the aid of the Foreign Office, «to make Zog understand clearly the viewpoint of the British Government and induce him to accept the solution of a National Committee». Tajar concluded his report with the information that Çekrezi also was «acting on the same line with the State Department» in America.²

From the marginal comments of the Foreign Office officials that accompanied the debates among the various Albanian emigration groups, time after time, it does not emerge that the British up till the

end of 1943 had decided any preference. They always kept their distance from this spectacle of petty quarrels provided by certain people with great ambitions, but with very little to offer. In January D. Laskey wrote that the Albanians abroad were divided into two factions: one pro Zog and the other against him, but the Foreign Office did not know how much weight they carried inside Albania. Therefore, he added, «our policy has been to try to hold the balance evenly between them», leaning neither to the one side, nor to the other.¹ However the problem, could no longer leave them so indifferent. On the contrary, the missions of the British officers that had landed in the country reported surprising things that reinforced the doubts that had begun some time back. Hence contact had to be established with the situation inside the country, otherwise there was the danger that any solution from London might be left in mid-air. We shall see later that this was the main political task assigned to the British officers.

On the other hand, precisely the feeling that the ground was slipping from under his feet, impelled Zog to leave no stone unturned to ensure that he got back. With the passage of time, even he could see that the agreement with the emigrants' groups would not bring him any great benefit. He based his hopes more and more on foreign support. And since certain difficulties emerged in his dealings with «the mighty», he was ready, as they say,

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

¹ Report of D. S. Laskey dated 7.I.1943, PRO-FO/371. File Nr. 37138.

to summon the demons as allies. As early as May 1943, he had established some contacts with the representatives of ... international zionism in England.

In the documents of the Foreign Office a short report is preserved to this day on the meeting that an envoy of the Anglo-Jewish Committee (who signs with the initials L.E.) had around the middle of May 1943, with S. Martini.¹ This was a preliminary meeting, necessary to prepare the ground for another meeting «at a high level» between Zog personally and two heads of the Anglo-Jewish Committee, that had to take place in strict secrecy. As it turns out from the report by L.E., the talk had more the form of a monologue by S. Martini, who had come to submit «the offers of King Zog». After pointing out that all the conversation of Martini was carried out «as if the restoration of King Zog in Albania was quite certain», L.E. reported the essence of the conversation itself:

Mr. Martini said: «When we go back we shall want capital, and we don't want to take any capital from Italy, Yugoslavia or Greece. We want it to be international, and the Jews are international. We have lots of land belonging to the State, and we have land for a very large number of Jewish settlers. We have also great forests. There are industries to be created. We have mineral wealth. We know also that we have got petrol. When we go back we know that we shall be secure; there will be no more Ita-

¹ Report of L. E. dated 20.V.1943, PRO-FO/371. File No. 37138.

lian threat. Our country has one million inhabitants and there is room for five million. Albanians are a persecuted people, and the Jews are a persecuted people. We have no religious intolerance... We want helpers. There is an opportunity for the Jews.»¹

Taking the above report to the Foreign Office, one of the heads of the Anglo-Jewish Committee Brotman, at the beginning of June, wanted to know whether the British would raise any obstacle to the meeting that it was proposed to hold with Zog «in the near future»². Neither the Southern Department nor the Department of Refugees, to which the question was sent, had any objection and the Zog-Brotman meeting was held at the beginning of July. Immediately after the meeting Brotman went to the Foreign Office and reported verbally on the content of the talks.³ After explaining that Albania was a rich country with an impoverished people, Zog had said that «he would be prepared to put 150,000 hectares at the disposal of the Jews on which they could settle up to 50,000 Jewish families, i.e. approximately 200,000 Jews.» He had also promised to give them «full citizen rights». In the end, Brotman asked for an opinion on the part of the Foreign Office «whether Zog could be treated seriously», because «they could not

¹ Report of L.E. dated 20.V.1943, PRO-FO/371. File No. 37138.

² Notation of I. K. Roberts dated 31.V.1943, PRO-FO/371. File No. 37138.

³ Report of A. Harrison dated 6.VII.1943 on the meeting of Brotman with Zog on 5.VII.1943, PRO-FO/371. File No. 37138.

afford to ignore any offer», even though it seemed like a «fleabite» to Brotman.¹

The Foreign Office did not give any clear answer. Brotman was told that it could not be stated with certainty whether or not Zog would return to Albania.² However, in January 1944 this matter crops up again. Again it is regard to be a bit of information that has reached the Southern Department of an interview of Zog «with three or four members of the Anglo-Jewish Association», in the course of which Zog «offered to sponsor a plan for Jewish settlement in Albania», if (this is where he comes out bluntly) «the Jews would help him to recover his throne.»³ There is also a marginal note signed by E.M. Rose, another functionary of the Southern Department, which says: «This is certainly interesting but sounds rather unlike Zog.»⁴ It sounds rather unlike Zog?! This means he did not know Zog at all, because Zog has never expressed himself better than when he is putting the wealth of Albania up for auction.

As for these plans, the least that might be said is that they were «reckoning without the host». The most surprising thing is not that Zog dared to

¹ Report of L.E., dated 20.V.1943, PRO-FO/371, File No. 37138.

² E. Barker, op. cit. p. 177.

³ Notation for Mr. Clutton (Southern Department) with an illegible signature dated 25.I.1944, PRO-FO/371, «Albania 1944». File No. 43559.

⁴ *Ibid.*

enter into such transactions, as that he was still finding ears that listened to him. These were symptoms of the irreversable senility of a diplomacy that had the reputation of being the «cleverest in the world», but which even over the «minor» Albanian question, damaged this reputation badly by its superficiality, dilettantism and lack of responsibility.

PART II

THE BRITISH OFFICERS IN ALBANIA AND THE NEW DEVELOPMENT IN BRITISH DIPLOMACY

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BRITISH DIPLOMACY

PART II

FROM NETWORKS OF AGENTS TO
«MILITARY MISSIONS»

It must be stated at the outset that with the material we have available at present, only a general idea, but not the full picture, can be given of the activity of the British officers in our country during the Second World War. To give such a picture we would need to have available the documents of those secret organs (such as organization D, S.O.2, M.I.R, S.O.E)¹ that divided their tasks, in connection with

1) Although it is not easy to find your bearings in the extensive and complicated network of the secret organs that the British set up during the Second World War, in broad outline the picture is as follows: S.O.E (Special Operations Executive) was created in July 1940, according to Churchill's idea, with the task of «kindling the blaze in Europe». Since before the war the British Secret Service in general, as well as the War Office, had created branches and sectors that should have engaged in «the organization of sabotage and subversive activities». But Churchill had lost confidence in their effectiveness. He described them as infected with «a defensive mentality», precisely that men-

the resistance movements in Europe sometimes according to the period, sometimes according to the region. The officers sent to occupied countries did not operate in the framework of open frontal war against the enemy, but in that of «activities of subversion and sabotage» behind the lines. For this reason they were charged with combining purely military tasks with political missions in their activities and the latter, with espionage and counter-espionage activities. Hence it is understandable why full documentation in relation to them (the reports and directives), has been kept under the strict secrecy which usually surrounds the activities of organs of this nature. We asked about documents of this kind. They told us that they are not available and,

tality which, as he put it, «did for France.» Whereas S.O.E. should be characterized by a spirit of initiative and attack the enemy behind the lines («we must not remain pinned down on our island»).

The Secret Intelligence Service and that of the army retained their functions and structure, but with the creation of S.O.E certain «specific» tasks and a few sections were merged in the new organization. Thus «organization D» of the Intelligence Service and M.I.R (a section of the Military Intelligence Research section) were transferred to S.O.E. At first this was divided into two major branches: S.O.1, which dealt with propaganda and S.O.2, which dealt with acts of sabotage. Later, when the Political Warfare Executive (PWE) was created in 1942, S.O.1 was incorporated into it, whereas the more S.O.E was extended the more it operated as a centralized unit. In order to emphasize its autonomy from the other related organizations, S.O.E was not placed under the supervision of the War Office, as it was once talked of, but was given to the Ministry of Economic Warfare.

as it seems it is very doubtful whether they will ever be available.

In any case, the activities of the «British Liaison Officers» (BLO), as they were called officially, could not but implicate the British foreign policy in a broader scale. That is why a good part of the relevant documents have long been in the archives of the Foreign Office. Thanks to these documents (whether original or copies of primary sources kept elsewhere), we are able to elucidate some of the principal moments of British policy in connection with both the National Liberation Movement and the traitor organizations in our country. Besides that, some of the protagonists of what have often been called the «Albanian adventures» have written and published their notes or reminiscences on the activities of the British missions in Albania during the Second World War. These can provide us with certain additional elements, although they must be treated with reserve, because we need only to compare them with some of the reports that the authors sent to the centre at that time, to become clearly aware of the rigorous selection of facts and the flagrant bias that runs right through them.

According to the admissions of those who were at the head of these affairs in Britain, the activity of British «missions» during the war, was not extended to any other country of Europe to the extent it was in the Balkan countries. The reasons given to explain this are «the rugged nature of the relief» and «the spirit of revolt of the peoples in these parts». But without doubt the considerations of the Churchillian strategy, that we had the occasion to

mention above, also played a definite part. Along with Yugoslavia and Greece, Albania was one of the countries that attracted most attention.

In the first part of this work we stated in a few lines how the interest of the British secret organizations in our country began in the spring of 1940, on the eve of Italy's entering the war. From the source referred to the book by J. Amery «Sons of the Eagle», we can add that «special Albanian branches» were set up in the two closest capitals, Belgrade and Athens. The head of the Belgrade section, in the summer of 1940, was the former instructor of the Zogist gendarmerie Lieutenant-Colonel Okley-Hill; here J. Amery, too, was to receive his baptism in Albanian events. Four years later, as we shall see, he was to come to Albania himself, for a mission «of special responsibility». In the Athens section, apparently a role of prime importance was played by Mrs. Hazluck, who had been here (especially in Elbasan) for several years up till 1939. She was a friend of Miss Durham, but she used her research in the field of folklore and anthropology as a façade to cover up her activity on behalf of the Secret Service. Later, all the British officers were to pass through the hands of Mrs. Hazluck. Before they landed in Albania they would receive from her some knowledge on the «customs, folklore, language and psychology».

The threads of the agency aimed at Albania were extended from Belgrade and Athens with the establishment of information groups in Salonika, Skopje and Istanbul. In the initial phase the head of this network was Colonel Stirling, another figure

known in Albania during Zog's rule. At the beginning of the 30's he had been «organizer» of the gendarmerie. Since the Balkans was included in the «Middle East Operational Zone» for understandable reasons of strategy, a special officer to deal with the affairs of Albania was appointed to General Wawel's Staff in Cairo. Major Cripps was charged with this task; he, too, was «formerly» of the gendarmerie.

«The Albanian organization» created in this manner, as a mixture of various militarymen, scientists, journalists, and professional agents, immediately drew up a very ambitious plan: to bring to life to an insurgent movement bearing the British hallmark in Albania, particularly in the northern districts. The documents of this time, as well as the works published later, state openly that the main elements that the British counted on to carry out such a plan were the vices of a handful of renegades and speculators, that they readily attributed to the whole people such as «the Albanians' spirit of anarchy» and «their greed for gold». In the 40's of the 20th century they still considered the Albanians «insensitive towards real ideals of nationality». J. Amery who pretends to have gone into the «essence of the history of this race», writes in his book (in 1948): «The Albanians are perhaps a people but not a nation in itself.»¹

¹ See J. Amery «Sons of the Eagle». Introduction p. 5, London 1948. In 1973 J. Amery came out with a new book entitled «Approach March» (published by Hutchinson, London). Apparently convinced that his life is sufficiently rich and «worthy» that he should leave an account fit to fu-

Equipped with such means and their heads stuffed with such views the British set out for their adventure in Albania. «Adventure» is precisely the world in this case, an a wild, irresponsible adventure, of the kind described in detective stories. The so-called united front of the Albanian resistance against Italy, is mentioned as a great achievement of the militants of the «Albanian organisation». A very long title for such an insignificant work. There was nothing more to it than an «alliance» of three persons brought to Belgrade for this purpose by the British agency. They were Gani Kryeziu, Abaz Kupi and Mustafa Gjinishi. J. Amery, who was among those who devised this event, admits it himself without the slightest embarrassment, that «the front was a fruit of the plans drawn up with patience for hours at a time at the extraterritorial security of the British Legation

ture generations, Amery has presented it in the form of an autobiography. He thinks that his childhood and youth, too, lived in the manner typical of the offspring of the aristocracy, are important to history and relates them to us at great length. Then he speaks of his introduction to political life, about his «baptism» of fire in the civil war in Spain, of course, on the side of Franco, whose victory he considers the best solution for the «west and democracy». Later comes his active participation in the ranks of the Secret Service that sent him on many missions around the world, stopping chiefly in such places as Vienna, Belgrade, Athens, Cairo and so on. Naturally his autobiography would not have been complete without his adventures in the mountains of Albania about which more will be said later. That is why in his new book «Mission in Albania» it occupies a separate chapter. However it is immediately obvious that it contains nothing new that was not in «Sons of the

and the conspiratory meetings at the dark corners of Belgrade». Nevertheless he presents it to us as a coalition» of the main forces of the Albanian uprising, a coalition in which neither the «centre» (G. Kryeziu), the right wing (A. Kupi with «Legality») nor the left wing (M. Gjinishi with «the communist party») were missing.¹

They had to be the three pillars of the British-made movement for an uprising in Albania. We already know the role that was assigned at one moment to G. Kryeziu in the plan for the uprising in the North, which was discussed at the Foreign Office in November-December 1940, after the outbreak of the Greek-Italian War.² When this was abandoned, it was decided to go over to longer-term actions for the organization of the Albanian uprising and, to this end, the three: G. Kryeziu, A. Kupi and M. Gjinishi, accompanied by Okley-Hill, were infiltrated into the north from Yugoslavia, in April 1941.

Eagle» written a quarter of a century before: most of it has simply been lifted from that work holusbolus, and insisted in the new book to increase the volume and weight of his autobiography. However one thing strikes the eye, the aristocratic, imperial, anti-communist and anti-Albanian spirit (in that part which refers to our country) has been stressed even more, and this shows that Amery and company are ready to write history to their own taste, but not to learn lessons from real history. In general in this autobiographical book, J. Amery has wanted to build a monument to himself and his class. In reality he has presented to us fragments of a world of which he speaks with nostalgia, but upon which the peoples have long turned their backs.

¹ J. Amery «Sons of the Eagle». Prologue, pp. 35-36.

² See Part I.

It is not without value to know these things, because day-dreams as they are, they help us to see the great gulf that divides the National Liberation Movement in Albania from the miracle-working schemes of British diplomacy and the Secret Service. What happened in fact? After the defeat of Yugoslavia and Greece by the nazi troops, this British undertaking was left dangling in mid air: the Albanian participants dispersed, while Okley-Hill, after a long trek from our northern mountains to Belgrade, surrendered to the Germans. Naturally, the British did establish some espionage contacts and they remained, but the least that can be said is that they did not function for long, while the most important thing is that they never established any basis to influence the real situation of Albania. Our National Liberation Movement was born and developed on an entirely different line. Not on the line of anarchy, or mercenary interests but on that of widespread, organized, people's war.

This suffices to explain why for years on end the British were almost totally in the dark in regard to the development of the situation in Albania. From all the network of the «Albanian organization» only one point of information remained, that in Istanbul headed by Mrs Hazluck, who tried to compensate for the lack of regular information with the testimony of occasional travellers. They brought her the first news about the demonstrations of the «youth», about the leaflets that were being distributed about the killing of spies in the cities, and about the armed fighting between the fascist militia and the partisan çeta on the main highways. The picture that emerged from

all this was that Albania was being swept by an «anti-Italian agitation» much stronger than had ever been expected.¹

At this juncture, British policy defined its new stand, already known, on the question of the future of Albania. It saw that with plans from abroad alone it was not going to achieve anything: if it did not want this future be prepared without the participation of Britain, it was absolutely essential to establish direct contact quickly with the situation inside the country. The stepping up of military operations in the Mediterranean at the beginning of 1943 and the immediate prospect of their extension to Southern Italy and the Adriatic, helped matters along. In these circumstances, a group of four British officers, headed by Major Bill Maclean, who had a «good grounding» of experience in the war of the «guerrillas» in Palestine and the colonial war in Abyssinia, went from North Africa to Greece, at the beginning of April 1943, and from there crossed our southern border and appeared on this side.²

The first reports that the British officers sent are interesting. Of course nobody can get hold of the original reports, but the «fortnightly appreciations» that the S.O.E centre in London sent to the Foreign Office in July 1943 can be read.³ The first thing

1 According to J. Amery's «Sons of the Eagle», Prologue.

2 Ibid. pp. 23-71.

3 Such summaries are contained in PRO-FO/371 Albania 1943. File N° 37144. Two of them, exceptionally interesting, are accompanied with this note of S.O.E (with the signature of Colonel Pearson) addressed to P. Dixon on 6. VII.1943:

that strikes the eye is their tone: those who sent them out, described the events and facts clearly relishing the sensation that contact with a newly discovered «world» inspires. However in place of any comment, the quotation of certain passages from these summaries can best achieve our purpose.

«1. There is gratifying news to hand. Intelligence Service for Albania is sound and Albanian guerrillas are as active and as anti-Italian as had been reported.

«2. Most remarkably, the clandestine newspaper called Zëri i popullit (Voice of the People) made its first appearance in August 1942, when the Germans still seemed irresistible and their Italian satellites seemed fixtures in Albania.

«3. At least a portion of the doubts which have been expressed in certain quarters about the veracity of Albanian reports of engagements between Albanian guerrillas and Italian troops may be laid to rest for good. One of the British officers now in Albania was actually present at the action which occurred, as already reported, at the end of May at the small town of Leskovik in South Albania. He reports that the bands withstood bombing and strafing from aircraft and held the town for 15 hours; peasants and women brought them food and ammunition. The

«With reference to your request for more information on Albania, I think that the attached two Fortnightly Appreciations will give you quite an insight into conditions prevailing there now.

«A large part of the information is derived from reports sent out by our officers, and as you know we are sending in more officers so as to increase the flow of our intelligence.»

Italians brought up reinforcements from Yannina... They (Italians) had to evacuate not only Leskovik town, but also Perat Bridge and lost 10 officers and 152 men killed, many wounded... Afterwards, in reprisal, they burned 5 villages along the road from Leskovik to Korça. The leader of the British party has most wishly requested that news of the engagement should be broadcast by the B.B.C. There is no doubt that such a broadcast would hearten the guerrillas themselves... It would also notably enhance the prestige of the present British party...

«4. The British officer reports that the bands he has contacted in S.W. Albania comprise about 40 men each, economic reasons keeping the numbers down. Discipline is maintained within the band and outside it.

«5. The first clandestine paper to be read cheered for the Soviet Union, England and America in that order.

«6. The major surprise is the pro-Russian sympathies (Sic!) of the guerrillas. In pre-war days the communist influence in Albania was negligible and the cause of the change is far from clear. It is certain only that it has taken place. The clandestine papers mention the Albanian Communist Party, political commissars, the people's army, clenched fists, partisans and other Red trappings. The partisans wear a 5-pointed star as a badge beside the Albanian flag.

«7. The British officer has been in one of the areas where there is a Greek minority but has made no report of ill-treatment of this minority by the Albanians. The use of the term 'Turco-Albanians' and 'Northern Epirus' which the Greeks have succeeded

in imposing on certain British circles... does not help matters. The first falls as pleasantly ...The second is a perpetual reminder to the Albanians that the Greeks aim at having Albania partitioned.

«8. The anti-Italian activities of Albanian guerrillas are incessant, considerable, and susceptible of great expansion; co-ordination and supplies are lacking.»¹

There are many such reports in the files of the Foreign Office. To tell the truth, in reading them, even though they were not always correct and complete, it seemed as if one was reliving those unforgettable emotion-packed years of our people's war. The leaflets and communiqués on the actions of the partisan detachments, the appeals, the summaries from the organs of our press, passed before one's eyes and one could not help taking a big leap backward in time. Looking at them in that way, so far away, lost in the multitude of readers of the British archives, in such a strange environment and such a strange language, one unwittingly adopted a kind of distance in order to glance over the events that shook the country some thirty years or so ago. Truly a picture to arouse enthusiasm: the picture of a people that, with proud disregard of their size and wealth, know how to fight with rare vitality for their land and for an ideal. There are moments when the feeling of pride for one's people surges up with special force, and one wonders: what effect did this news have in its time on the British politicians, who with cold

¹ Extracted from the two above summaries.

hearts and minds were allotting our country another fate?

But no, «politics is politics».

It is a fact that at first the British officers tried to display their zeal. They sent a steady stream of reports, which were transmitted by radio to Cairo or sent by their own mail which was picked up every so often by sea, somewhere in the vicinity of Vlora. But the roles had been apportioned. The task of the BLO was to send as many reports as possible. As to what would be done with them, that was decided in London. They circulated as secret documents from one ministry to another but reports on the actions of the Albanian partisans rarely penetrated the waves of BBC, and even less the press. The reason was simple. The National Liberation Movement was a «leftist» organization and, as such, it could not constitute that contact which the British policy needed in Albania. That is why a special «Albanian directive» ordered the BBC «not to give any publicity to the National Liberation War.»¹

Under these circumstances political task assumed first rate importance for the British officers in Al-

¹ The reference is to a «directive» that the Political Investigation Department of the Foreign Office had sent to BBC, as emerges from a document by the chief of this Department, E. Barker, of November 19, 1943. In response to a reprimand he received, Barker stressed there:

«I do not think there is any tendency on the part of the B.B.C. to take sides between the L.N.Ç. and the Balli Kombëtar, except in so far as they are permitted, by the terms of our last Albanian directive, to mention operations by the L.N.Ç. occasionally, without boosting the L.N.Ç.,...»
PRO-FO/371. File N° 37145.

bania, too. They had to track down such rightist «nationalist» political forces, that would make it possible to keep Albania in Britain's sphere of influence after the war. Thus the British officers began to say that, as representatives of the allied military forces, they were interested in the greatest possible extension of the fighting against the fascist troops, therefore they had to make contact with «all the resistance forces in Albania». And although these «other forces» had already gone most of the way towards complete collaboration with the enemy, the British missions in our country also branched out in their direction. Scores of officers were sent to the «Balli Kombëtar», to Abaz Kupi, to the bajraktars of the North and (of course) up to Gani Kryeziu in the extreme north-east.¹

1 J. Amery «Sons of the Eagle», p. 92.

THE DAVIES' MISSION

It is quite obvious that in the autumn of 1943, after the capitulation of Italy, the British are trying to make up for «lost time» on the Albanian question. They set themselves the urgent task of «finding an alternative to the National Liberation Movement». They see that with the «Balli» they may be too late and cannot hope for much: it has been badly discredited among local opinion, and, what is more important, it is being routed militarily, too, by the partisan forces. Here they make their first flagrant interference in our internal affairs: instead of seeing this as a logical result of the betrayal by the Ballists, they label it a «civil war». It soon emerges openly that their whole design is to bring out Abaz Kupi and «Legality» as a force that has to arbitrate between the «two rival factions» and stop the «fratricidal war». In connection with this, in his report to the First Party Congress, Comrade Enver Hoxha said: «The British

thought that the capitulation of Italy was the appropriate moment to play the card of Zog.»¹ On the very «instruction» of British officers, Abaz Kupi threw off his disguise and called a meeting at Zall-Herr where he created «Legality» as a separate party. He was to listen to British advice later too.²

In general the campaign for the «return» of Albania to the British orbit was in full swing by the end of 1943. After a stay of seven months MacLean was withdrawn to give a report. To replace him, as head of the mission and «subsidiary missions» that had been greatly extended, a more senior officer, Brigadier Davies was sent. Attention to the Albanian question was on the increase.³ At the end of November another «inspired» question was asked in the House of Commons and Prime Minister Churchill personally made a statement. At a time when the Foreign Secretary Eden was excluding the Albanians from the ranks of the anti-fascist united nations, Churchill was praising the «fighting of the Albanian guerrillas» and, bearing in mind the reports of the BLO, was telling how the «British Liaison Officers have paid high tribute to their fighting qualities». He expressed the hope to look to the «Albanians to play their part in accordance with their ancient warlike traditions in the future military developments in the Mediterranean area», but he did not

1 Enver Hoxha, Works, vol. 5, p. 301 (Alb. ed.).

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 301-303.

3 See letter of E. G. Boxshall addressed to Miss Barker P.I.D., dated 20.X.1943, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 37145.

fail to stress, also, that the «frontiers» will of course be considered at the Peace Settlement».¹

One cannot help but notice that all these public statements spoke in general about the «Albanian guerrillas», while carefully avoiding any precise statement. What of it that the reports of the BLO spoke of the National Liberation Movement as the only force of the resistance against the Germans, and told of the open or secret collaboration of the «Balli» and «Legality» with the nazi occupiers and the quisling government. The official propaganda persisted on its course: it preferred the unclear formulations and all-embracing terms.

The position was extremely contradictory, unstable. Perhaps the British would have liked to continue this difficult «tight-rope walking» until the «situation was cleared up» in their favour. However the National Liberation Movement rejected any compromise and they did not find it easy to place themselves comfortably between the active forces of the Albanian resistance and the Ballist and Zogist frauds. Thus their political stands were in contradiction to the need to carry out fighting actions. To this must be added the fact that the tactics and strategy of London were already quite clear to the NLM. In a directive that was sent to the Party regional committees at the beginning of November 1943, Comrade Enver Hoxha gave these instructions, that were to

1 Hubert's question and Prime Minister Churchill's reply in PRO-FO/371. File Nr. 37145. This would not hinder Eden from speaking over BBC in December, about «the fighting of the Yugoslavs and the Greeks» without ever mentioning the fighting of the Albanian partisans.

protect the NLM from the unpleasant surprises that its open and hidden enemies reserved for it. «In many regions,» wrote Comrade Enver Hoxha, «there are British missions which try to poke their noses into our political affairs, and particularly into our international organizational and military affairs. They are trying to unite with the reactionaries, to organize them in order to use them in the event of a landing here. The British officers carry out this activity sometimes openly and sometimes secretly. They need a strong movement which has credibility among the people, and therefore they are trying to raise the prestige of the 'Balli Kombëtar', to involve it in the war against the Germans so as to have it as a support in the future. But we must not forget that their primary interest should be the war against the Germans, a war which, here in Albania, is being fought by the national liberation movement alone, and therefore, they are obliged to help our movement. We must behave correctly towards them, at the same time taking a clear-cut stand.»¹

In the case of General Davies the difficulties connected with the complicated political and military game of the British came to light in quite a sensational way. Davies has written a volume of recollections, published in 1952, a short time after his death, entitled «Illyrian Venture», about the task he was charged with when he landed here in October 1943. It is difficult to say whether the author had a secret passion for archaeological subjects, but it is obvious that the book has nothing at all to do with the ancient

inhabitants of Albania. From its content it is divided into two approximately equal parts: one is dedicated to his «experience» in the mountains of Central Albania, the other to his imprisonment in German hospitals and camps, because Davies was wounded and captured during the Winter Operation in January 1944. Even in his book Davies states frankly that the whole burden of the war against the nazi occupiers fell on the shoulders of the National Liberation Movement, while the «Balli» and «Legality» readily became partners of the occupiers in the anti-communist campaign. On the other hand, there is a clear tendency on the part of the author to put the accent on the «civil war», which he inflates beyond all measure and presents as the «predominant factor in the military activities in Albania» during this period, and even calls it a result of the «intolerance of the partisan forces».

This is the way Davies writes in «Illyrian Venture».¹ Now it turns out that in the secret reports which he sent from here at that time he said the opposite, particularly in two messages that he transmitted to his centre in Cairo: one in November and the other in December 1943.

In the former, which is dated November 19, 1943, and which is written in the form of replies to a questionnaire of the Foreign Office, the points below are of special interest:

«1. I cannot recommend exclusive support of L.N.C. at this stage. I hold a signed agreement from

¹ Enver Hoxha, Works, vol. 2, p. 30-31 (Alb. ed.).

¹ Brigadier 'Trotsky' Davies, «Illyrian Venture», London 1952.

the Balli Kombëtar that they will fight the Germans and until I have proof that this agreement is false, I propose to continue contacting the Balli Kombëtar Council.

«2. I do not consider an outside Albanian Committee would materially assist the resistance movement inside the country.

3. I do not recommend supporting Zog... The L.N.Ç. are dead against Zog. The Balli Kombëtar approves of such a committee (abroad) and Zog's association with it.

«4. The Balli Kombëtar state that they disapprove of the new pro-German Government, but the impression given me after a long talk is that they (the Balli Kombëtar) are associated with it and the general opinion in Tirana and the country is that the two (the Balli and Government) are closely associated.

«5. Civil war has already started between the L.N.Ç. and the Balli Kombëtar and will increase. I consider the L.N.Ç. likely to win because young, more aggressive... The Balli Kombëtar intend to resist the L.N.Ç. to the fullest extent and will possibly be aided by the Zogists under Abaz Kupa... I have personally done my utmost with all parties to avoid civil war, but without success.»¹

Although there are not direct indications, still from those few documents that have to do with Davies' mission, it turns out that he was charged with making an evaluation of the situation in Albania and to help the Foreign Office overcome its wavering

¹ Telegram of Brigadier Davies retransmitted from Cairo to London dated 19.XI.1943, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 37145.

and to determine its Albanian policy definitely. We saw from his report that, after he had made contact with «all the forces» he seeks a little time in order to give a clearer opinion. It can also be seen that he makes a desperate attempt to «recuperate» the «Balli» because as he states in his «Recollections», Abaz Kupa did not look much good to him. A summarized review of the S.O.E.¹ relates that «Brigadier Davies asked the Central Council of L.N.Ç., on November 11, to cancel orders to destroy Balli Kombëtar, in view of the latter's undertaking to fight the Germans. The Council refused to comply, accusing the Balli Kombëtar of bad faith and collaboration.»²

This first message of Davies made a good impression at the Foreign Office. They particularly liked the revived hopes (no matter how slight) of «reintegrating» «Balli» as a prime factor in the Albanian policy of Britain. At the beginning of December they informed Davies (through Cairo) from the Foreign Office that «they agreed with his recommendations and would be guided by them until he proposed a change». They wanted to know only in what proportions to divide the so-called supplies of arms for the National Liberation Movement and the «Balli Kombëtar.»³

On December 17, Davies sent out his second

¹ Report on the situation in Albania dated 19.XI.1943. PRO-FO/371. File N°. 37145.

² *Ibid.*

³ Telegram of Foreign Office dated 3.12.1943 addressed to secretary of state residing in Cairo to transmit it to Brigadier Davies, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 37145.

message. It comprised seven points which we think are worth giving in full.

«1. Now recommend a change. Situation developed recently so much imperative now denounce Regency Council collectively and by name. Also Balkom and Zogists.

«2. All are co-operating with Germans, who are exploiting with arms in large quantities, setting them to guard main roads, police towns and lead patrols thus freeing German troops (from these tasks).

«3. All recent actions fought by L.N.Ç. have met German Balkom bodies well armed German-trained. Battles Peza and Dibra areas, especially latter, have ample proof closest collaboration.

«4. Balkom and Abaz Kupa both promised me fight Germans actively, but not one action have they fought this past month, although there have been many chances for them to resist the Germans. Abaz Kupa has resigned his seat on the L.N.Ç. Council and broken with them.

«5. Both the Balkom and Zogists now publish expensive ambitious newspaper obviously German set-up. In eight editions there has not been one anti-German reference. Both parties boasting Allies will co-operate with them after Germans go quoting as evidence Britain's failure to name the Regency Council or any political party. Example: — B.B.C. Director's speech to Albania on 28th November.

«6. I would have preferred to explain personally when I come out, but I may be delayed, and am unlikely to reach you before mid-January at the earliest.

«7. I consider the Allies attitude should be made public forth-with, showing Quislings, traitors and

non-resisters to Germans will receive appropriate punitive treatment from the Allies in due course. The Albanians have played this Quisling game successfully with the Turks, Italians and now the Germans. They are confident of doing the same with the Allies. Therefore, I recommend an open declaration for the L.N.Ç.»¹

This message, which undoubtedly constitutes the most important step during his mission in Albania, Davies does not mention even indirectly in the book he has published. Of course it could not be supposed that such a fact would be readily let out twenty years or so ago. Even J. Amery says that publications of this kind had first to pass the censorship of the Secret Service. Hence on the one hand, Davies submits to the rule of secrecy, while, on the other, he adheres strictly to the official policy of Britain towards Albania at that time. Otherwise he would not have denied what he himself had seen, would not have spoken of a «civil war» and would not have laid the blame for it on our movement.

Davies could not but have known that his message fell like a bombshell during the last days of December 1943 and the beginning of January 1944, first of all in Cairo. There the question was examined at a special meeting of the S.O.E. Committee on December 31, and they decided that Davies' «request» should not be accepted. The National Liberation Movement would not be «recognized» and neither would the «Balli» and «Legality» be denounced. Mr. Steel,

¹ Tel. of Brigadier Davies dated 17.XII.1943, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 37145.

whose position is not clearly defined in the documents, although it appears that he was a representative of the Foreign Office, charged with the handling of political problems attached to the military organs and those of the Secret Service that operated in the Mediterranean basin, reported to the Southern Department on January 1, by telegram the reasons that served as a basis to reject the taking of such a stand.¹ «His Majesty's Government,» he said, «would wish to be sure that the side they took was the right one. As regards the parties are fairly evenly matched though L.N.Ç. are certainly the most aggressive.² Balkom are reported to have ordered the cessation of hostilities against the Germans, but in view of the traditional and notorious Albanian xenophobia(?) it may be taken that few are genuinely pro-axis and they have no doubt accepted German help against L.N.Ç. on naturally opportunist grounds. Finally, it must be remembered what Brigadier Davies is naturally rather under the impression (sic!) of L.N.Ç. at whose headquarters he has been living. ... he has actually been out of communication with us in Cairo since December 18th, owing apparently to the destruction and dispersal of his own and L.N.Ç. headquarters.»³ Therefore in this unclear situation he recommended a «non-interventionist» policy, which, in fact, meant that support for the «Balli Kombëtar» and the other traitor organizations should

1 Tel. of Mr. Steel from Cairo for the Southern Department dated 1.1.1944, PRO-FO/371. «Albania 1944». File N°. 43549.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

be continued. From this it can be gathered how strongly prejudiced they were against the National Liberation Movement, how determined the British were not to reconcile themselves to the real situation.

The Foreign Office approved the conclusions of the Cairo meeting and dispatched them again on January 22, as a «new Albanian directive» in which the only new thing was that now it had been decided (at the end of January 1944!) that the «Regency Council and the quisling government should be openly condemned.»¹ Such was the speed with which British diplomacy moved on the Albanian question.

In London the belief was gaining ground that the development of the situation within Albania during these winter months itself indicated the need for great «prudence». Indeed it seems as if the news about the major German operations against the partisan forces were received there with an unconcealed sense of relief. Here is what we can read in an «outline of the situation» written in Cairo by Force 133, dated January 9, 1944: «The Albanian Civil War is ending, healing from within. Its disappearance leaves the Albanians free to think once more of the invader. Soon most of the country will go to Balkom. Already the only important leaders left to the L.N.Ç. are Myslim Peza and Baba Faja... The defection ... of the two looms ahead. We must, consequently, reckon with the Balkom for our war effort... we need not fear this issue.

1 Telegram of Foreign Office to Cairo dated 22.1.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43549.

«But Balkom lacks both leadership and arms. The BLO's can supply both. The Balkom may do nothing but passively obstruct the Germans. But passive obstruction by Albanians can be formidable.»¹

Whereas in another «outline» of January 24, the main conclusion that comes out is this: «... it is fortunate that we have maintained contact with both the Balkom and the L.N.Ç. The potentialities of both are for the moment in abeyance. The coming of spring and probable flight of the Germans will give both their opportunity. It is for us to see that neither by word nor by deed do we alienate either.»²

1 Report of Force 133 on situation in Albania dated 9.I.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43549.

2 Report of Force 133 on situation in Albania dated 24.I.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43549.

MCLEAN'S MEMORANDUM

At this time and up till autumn of 1944, what has been called Major McLean's «Memorandum on Albania» played an important role in the Albanian policy of the Foreign Office.¹ We said above that in November 1943 McLean was withdrawn to report. He arrived in Cairo and then went on to London, where he stayed for several weeks. There he drew up a long report of some 30 pages, that immediately ranked McLean among the best «experts» on Albanian affairs. Howard, the chief of the Southern Department, recommended it to Sargent at the end of January as the «most informative document on Albania that we have seen.»² In fact McLean set out with the aim of making not just a simple listing of facts, but a complete study of the situation in the

1 Memorandum on Albania by Major McLean, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43549.

2 Note of D. Howard for Sir O. Sargent dated 27.I.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43549.

country. His attempt to describe the economic and social structure is followed by a political and military presentation of the «Albanian resistance», among which, as could be expected, he has laboured to include the traitorous organizations. The whole thing is wound up with the ever present conclusions, which are submitted for judgement to the top people responsible for British policy.

McLean's «memorandum» is not lacking in interesting observations and we would say that here and there it contains objective assessments. Let us turn to what is said in the introduction about the way in which the British officers were received as soon as they stepped on to Albanian soil. We leave the truth of the reports about the «magnificent reception» and the «parades with bands» in the neighbouring Greek villages¹ to the author's conscience. We are sticking to those that have to do with the villages on our side. Here the British officers immediately encountered a deep mistrust, which McLean calls «typical of the attitude of this people towards Great Britain». The Albanian peasants, continues McLean, «treated us with respect and gave us the best food they had». However «they did this impelled by their sense of hospitality and not from spontaneous feelings of friendship and cordiality.»

Perhaps McLean was ready to take this as another sign of much trumpeted «Albanian sa-

¹ McLean and his associates were landed initially in the operational zone of a British mission in Northern Greece, close to our southern border. J. Amery «Sons of the Eagle», Prologue, p. 51.

vagery»¹. During these days we had come across some letters of Miss Durham's from Northern Albania that referred to an earlier period in history, that of the Albanian uprising at the end of 1911. Our attention was drawn particularly by a letter of Miss Durham's which, although written more than thirty years ago, struck a strong contemporary note. There she recalls the words of an insurgent of the Highlands about the policy of the European great powers. In conversation about the «great policy», he was reluctant to believe that the European powers were not pleased by Italy's attack on Tripoli, which had just occurred those days. «Yes,» said our mountaineer, «these are the words that they (the powers) say. But we know the powers very well. They are like thieves, who quarrel during the day, *while at night they gather together and go stealing*». Durham herself added: «This is the opinion that the so-called savages of these mountains have of those who consider themselves the pioneers of civilization.»² Of course these words, in their simplicity, show better than anything else the truth that the mistrust of the Albanians towards the powers («Europe» in our fol-

¹ In fact, in his book J. Amery uses greatly intensified colours to paint this event, which he certainly heard about from McLean, because he was not there himself. «They (the British Officers) were welcomed as guests in the villages with the courtesy of guests but they did not notice any enthusiasm such as was seen in Greece. With all their nordic appearance, which attracted your attention, in the beginning they were kept inside as Greek spies and their life was in danger (sic!)» op. cit. Prologue, p. 51.

² Letter of Miss M. Durham addressed to N. Spencer dated 19.XII.1911, PRO-FO/195 - 1912. File N°. 2406.

klore) has not been an expression of a primitive backward mentality, but a manifestation of a deep conviction which, in the final analysis, finds the most complete justification in the historical experience of our people.

In the so-called economic and social analysis that McLean attempts to make of Albanian society, it is easy to discern an indication of the apriori judgements with which he came to our country. His main idea here is the division of Albania. According to him, this division is first geographical: «Albania», he says, «is divided into two halves: the North and the South.» Gegëria and Toskëria emerge with all the distinctions and indeed, deep contrasts, that we are accustomed to read about in certain foreign literature, in which definite political aims have often been cloaked in the robes of Albanology. Second, the division is religious, a division which fragments the Albanian people into three different parts. The idea of division is developed further giving a third division... social. According to McLean here the division coincides with the geographical one: the tribal organization in Northern Albania and feudalism in the South. Of course the clans, the ancient customs and prejudices, the blood feuds and the «amazing code of Dukagjin» are given special attention. According to McLean, the «code combines with the stubborn character of the Albanians to influence their way of life and their political stand more strongly than any other factor». There is a reason for mentioning these things too, because it appears that it has been a general «failing» of foreign observers of the «Albanian phenomenon» to grasp only

one aspect: they have come here as to a museum, have interested themselves in the relics of ancient times, in antiquity, and have not been able (more often have not wanted) to distinguish the major tendency of the development of the epoch, from which our society could not escape, either in the North, or in the South. In a word, many threads still kept it tied to the Middle Ages but its face was already turned towards the 20th century.

Obviously, it was not theoretical-scientific interests that impelled McLean to argue the threefold division of Albania. In particular, he regarded the barrier between North and South as the only possibility that still remained for British policy to block the way to the extension of the National Liberation Movement to the northern half of the country.

In that part of the memorandum that talks about the alignment of political forces inside the country, McLean finds it easier to speak realistically and objectively, since his document is profoundly secret and destined for internal use. The National Liberation Movement is given pride of place. After devoting whole pages to its foundation, development, organization, program and activities, McLean gives this conclusive judgement: «From the military standpoint the National Liberation Movement is the strongest party in Albania, no other party comes near it. From the political and administrative standpoint (here he means the exercise of power in the liberated regions - A. Puto) it is organized very well. At the same time it is the most active against the axis powers. Consequently it is worthy of support from the angle of military needs». But only «from the angle

of military needs». Politically the most trustworthy, the most disposed towards the British policy are the «Balli Kombëtar» and the «Zogist party». True they are «loose, passive, amorphous organizations», but only through them can it be hoped to find the thread to unravel the tangle of the Albanian policy of Great Britain.

Of the two, the «Balli» has committed the «blunder» of collaborating with the occupiers, especially now quite openly with the German forces. That is why McLean inclines openly towards Abaz Kupa. First, according to McLean, he still has not taken the «fatal step» (in November 1943 when McLean left); second, his beginnings as an agent cannot but be an added guarantee. Thus McLean does not hesitate to call the illiterate bajraktar the «most remarkable personality of all the parties», «whose personal position in Albania is almost unique». If we add here also that later J. Amery in his book is not lagging in his praises when, besides pointing out his «rare natural intelligence» he also speaks of the «astonishing physical resemblance» of Bazi i Canës to the Great Napoleon, one is hard put to it to understand what could have inspired such superlative evaluations and comparisons.¹

1 J. Amery, op. cit. In his book, after he has described the seven months he spent together with him (in 1944), Amery goes on to make an entire apology of Bazi, which he does not hesitate to call a «born guerrilla leader» and even praises «his mastery in the manipulation of people and the natural pragmatism of his world outlook». (p. 323) However it is not difficult to read between the lines that what he most likes about the illiterate chieftain is his utter servility towards the British masters.

However, there is no denying that McLean is coherent: in his reasoning the «Zogist party» and Abaz Kupa gain ever greater weight to the point that they become the key to the entire plan of British action on Albania in the immediate future. The main points of this plan are these: 1) The National Liberation Movement is the only force «of war value» and without it the war cannot be fought in Albania. 2) The national Liberation Movement must be extended «by including the greatest possible number of nationalists in it». McLean warns of the danger that, if things go on as they are going, «sooner or later we will have to deal only with the partisans», therefore «it is in our interests that there should be as many non-communists as possible in the ranks of the National Liberation Movement». 3) This delicate operation must be carried out under the slogan of «ending the civil war». Pressure must be exerted on the National Liberation Movement «not to attack the nationalists who are anti-partisan, but to neutralize them.» 4) A special role was assigned to Bazi i Canës within the framework of this stratagem. He had to be urged to regain the ranks of the National Liberation Movement, this time with a wider function, «in order to serve as a point around which all the nationalists who will participate in fighting the Germans will unite». The idea of the «Trojan Horse» immediately comes to mind.

At the end of his memorandum McLean states openly that he sees the main difficulty in achieving his plan in the «intransigent stand of the partisans». He thinks that this obstacle will not fall without pres-

sure from abroad also on the National Liberation Movement. To this end he proposes that «help from the Yugoslavs» should be sought. And he tells how, in Cairo, after he left Albania, he met «Tito's delegate there, Colonel Velebit», with whom he had an «unofficial talk». Velebit proved ready «to suggest to Tito that he send a directive (sic!) to the Council of the National Liberation Movement in Albania to put an end to the civil war», on one condition (a condition that did not seem difficult to McLean) «that BBC should no longer support or justify the Regency collaborationist government or the members of the 'Balli Kombëtar' who collaborate with the German forces».

Probably not even McLean himself, who drew it up, suspected that his memorandum would become the pivot of a feverish activity in the direction of Albania, that involved the topmost spheres of British policy. First of all, towards the end of January 1944, McLean, together with Major Smiley (also back from Albania, inseparable from McLean as assistant on technical military matters), were summoned to the Foreign Office where they were received by the Assistant Secretary O. Sargent, and the chief of the Southern Department, Howard. During the talks, both McLean and Smiley associated themselves with the idea that was already formed at the Foreign Office that the «suggestion of General Davies to support only the National Liberation Movement and to break with the other organizations was unwise». Whereas the main point that emerged from the conversation, according to

Howard, was that «Zog's credit was improving and that his movement in Albania was growing.»¹

In conformity with this conclusion, McLean proposed the following concrete plan of action. 1) He personally would return to Albania to Abaz Kupa with the task of getting him back into the ranks of the National Liberation Movement and into action against the Germans, even if only some symbolic actions, as the only possibility that remained to save him as a factor in future political elections. 2) At the request of Abaz Kupa, he was to receive a written message from Zog in which the «king» was to order his «loyal follower» to issue the call for the general uprising in the North.² At the beginning of February, Colonel Talbot-Rice of the Ministry of Economic Warfare notified Howard that «Our Minister has expressed approval of the policy suggested in Major McLean's report on Albania... and would like it to be put into effect... We should like to instruct Cairo to set this policy in motion...»³

There is no doubt that McLean's memorandum caused confusion in the minds of the Foreign Office officials. A few comments at the beginning of February testify for a new pro-Zogist wave. In one of them we read: «We have never felt strongly one way or the other about King Zog. We have merely

1 Report of D. Howard for Sir O. Sargent dated 27.I.1944. PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43549.

2 Report of O. Sargent for Secretary of State A. Eden dated 21.II.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43549.

3 Letter of D. Talbot-Rice addressed to D. Howard dated 3.II.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43555.

wished to avoid committing ourselves to support him so long as we were not sure that he could command the backing of the country.

«Major McLean's report shows that the Zogist movement under Abaz Kupa is gaining strength in Albania and that it is the only effective nationalist group as opposed to the Communist L.N.Ç.... For this purpose Zog's cooperation will be necessary and we can see no reason against asking for it.»¹ From the second comment we offer these lines. «Just as in Greece public opinion seems to be turning around in favour of the King so in Albania feeling may be growing in favour of the return of King Zog. There would seem to be no harm in taking account of this feeling...»² All this is proof of how the imagination can be made to serve desire, since in no instance, not even at the most difficult moments of the war in the winter of 1943-1944, was even the slightest change of opinion observed in our country, in favour of the return of a long discredited regime.

And the «fresh» reports and appraisals that were coming from the «terrain», from Cairo, were no less optimistic. In one of the «summaries» of Force 133, dated February 6, this can be read: «The Zogist party, now known as the 'Movement of Legitimacy' has every chance of success as its leader, Major Abaz Kupa, enjoys a high reputation as a patriot and has sensibly stood aloof from the civil

1 Notation of E. M. Rose dated 10.II.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43549.

2 Notation with illegible signature dated 11.II.1944. *Ibid.*

war. Though the Albanians have few illusions on the subject of Zog, he (Bazi) appeals strongly to the nationalist and conservative elements which undoubtedly form the majority of the country as the only means of combating communism...» Hence the conclusion that «the Abaz Kupa movement is a force of potential military value and it is likely to represent the majority of the Albanian people.»¹

The truth is Eden himself had some hesitation. At the beginning of February he noted: «I didn't imagine that we would turn to Zog once again.»² The waverings were destined to increase with the passing of the days when even the «summaries» from Cairo began to speak in a different tone. Whereas up to the third week of February the defeat of the National Liberation Movement was reported almost a certainty, and it was said that «they continue to reap the consequences of their folly»,³ suddenly, towards the end of the month there was talk of a «miraculous partisan revival». «The partisan revival,» said the «summary» of the beginning of March, «is a tribute to the flexibility and resilience of the L.N.Ç. brigades, the majority of which were reported a month ago to be either dispersed by German drives or faced with immediate starvation. The strength of the partisans seems to

1 The biweekly summary of Force 133 on the situation in Albania dated 6.II.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43550.

2 Note of A. Eden on the side of telegram to the Foreign Office for Mr. Steel in Cairo dated 6.II.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43549.

3 Biweekly summary of Force 133 on the situation in Albania dated 7.II.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43550.

lie in their discipline, energy and clarity of aim, equalities singularly lacking in their nationalist opponents.»¹

In order to gain a clearer view of this situation, which the winter was not making any easier to understand, several special meetings were held between representatives of the Foreign Office, headed by O. Sargent, and the S.O.E officers headed by Talbot-Rice.² The purpose was to decide on some kind of stand before McLean left for his second mission to Albania. To this end, McLean was received twice by Eden himself. From the facts we have, it is clear that the people in London did not find it at all easy to decide on this stand. The question of the «Balli Kombëtar» confused matters, it was not simple. The people in London were always in a dilemma over it. Although its collaboration with the Germans was now completely open, still the British could not bring themselves to discard it. With what would the ranks of the anti-communist front, which was to oppose the NLM, be filled if every connection with the «Balli» were cut off? Something that happened precisely during those days when preparations were being made to send McLean to Albania indicates that not much was needed to make the functionaries of the Foreign Office and S.O.E change their minds again. At the end of February Cairo transmitted the report that Major Quayle had given from Vlora

¹ Biweekly summary of Force 133 on the situation in Albania dated 8.III.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43550.

² On this there are a number of letters exchanged between the functionaries of the Foreign Office and the representatives of S.O.E in February-March, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43550.

about a meeting with Skënder Muço, who had been sent to him «with a mission» by Mithat Frashëri personally. The meaning of this mission was that the «Balli» was ready to change masters, even though somewhat belatedly. Mithat's emissary had said that «the Balli Kombëtar are prepared to accept British orders and give immediate assistance (sic!), but wish to send an emissary to Cairo. The emissary would also wish to discuss Albanian representation in London and the possibility of a Balkan Federation, which the Balli Kombëtar is inclined to favour.»¹ Talbot-Rice, in a letter that he wrote to Howard on February 22, called this «an important development» in the situation of Albania, «which merits close attention». Furthermore he reported that the S.O.E had postponed McLean's return «until the question of policy towards Albania has been duly considered» once again and «you are in a position to let us have a directive».²

Concern about the stand to be taken towards the «Balli» is apparent also in the telegram that Mr. Steel sent to Howard that same day from Cairo. «Albanian affairs,» commenced Steel, «are growing still more complicated.» But in reality the difficulty was with the «Balli» and not with the affairs of Albania. On the one hand, he continued, «There is now no doubt that considerable numbers of Balkom supporters are co-operating closely with the Germans in the latter's present campaign in Southern Albania against L.N.Ç....» (Even this is a gross under-

¹ Letter of D. Talbot-Rice addressed to D. Howard dated 22.II.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43550.

² Ibid.

statement: Steel cannot bring himself to say that the entire «Balli» was engaged there.) Furthermore, Steel emphasized, this coupled with the now authentic information «of Balkom implication in the attack on Brigadier Davies...» But on the other hand, he added, «As you will observe we are still reluctant to denounce Balkom as such. This is because,» explained Steel, «Balkom is a very loose and incoherent organization comprised of nearly all elements hostile to Communism except Zogists...» Now comes this news from Major Quayle with the «official proposition of the Balkom» for collaboration in the war against the Germans, a proposal that appeared to be «sincere». And Steel concluded by saying that in Cairo they were going to study the matter once again.¹ In truth the matter «was studied» but it was concluded that «Balli» was demanding too much: in Cairo and London they might want to accept it, but in Albania this would have strong repercussions. That is why it was decided to continue contacts with «Balli» under the lap, using it more like an agency (as was to its liking) to gather information and perhaps for some act of subversion later.²

All this reaffirmed the conviction in London that, for the time being «Legality» was the only card left. But even this was no easy matter: the problem was how to reconcile *the desire* which undoubtedly

¹ Telegram of Mr. Steel for Howard from Cairo dated 22.II.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43550.

² Letter of E. Boxshall addressed to D. Howard dated 29.II.1944, together with an extract of the Cairo telegram N°. 1846 of the same date PRO-FO/371. File N° 43550.

leaned towards A. Kupi, with *the reality* which, was again going the way of the National Liberation Movement which was staging a «phenomenal comeback». They racked their brains especially to decide whether or not to ask Zog for the letter and who should do this: the S.O.E or the Foreign Office. Finally McLean himself went and met Zog as a militaryman, in an almost private manner, and got from him the letter which he regarded as an amulet.¹ But the letter created new problems: first, from its content, at the Foreign Office they would have preferred a kind of «blank cheque» which Zog could not give without first gaining some benefit himself (the more so now that the future did not give much promise). Second, was it opportune: should the letter be handed over to the addressee or could the introduction of the question of Zog serve as «tinder» to kindle the fire of the civil war even more?² In simpler language, this meant that even here the eventuality of a counteraction by the National Liberation Movement could not be disregarded.

It would be a long and by no means pleasant job to follow the course of all the versions, amendments, discussions, of the preparations generally, that preceded the departure of McLean for Cairo at the be-

¹ See letter of D. Talbot-Rice addressed to D. Howard dated 24.II.1944, together with the variant of Zog's letter for A. Kupi, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43550.

² Report of O. Sargent for Secretary of State. A. Eden dated 21.II.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43549.

ginning of March, and when all is said and done, all this concern can be understood if we bear in mind that McLean's second mission inside Albania constituted the final attempt to create an «equilibrium» in the political situation in Albania, more favorable to Great Britain.

THE McLEAN-AMERY MISSION

From the middle of February, urgent requests were coming from Cairo for the return of McLean so that he could be sent back to Albania «as he is considered to be best qualified to deal with the situation which is developing inside Albania...»¹ At the beginning of March, McLean set out from London. However several more weeks were to pass in further preparations in Cairo before McLean undertook his second mission in our country.

The new and main element of the preparations for this second mission was the inclusion of Julian Amery as adviser on political problems. This fact in itself is sufficient to underline the importance that the British gave this mission. As we have seen, Amery was an officer of the Secret Service from the beginning of the Second World War. We saw also, that he was not like all the others: he was from one of the most prominent families of England. It was not the custom

¹ Letter of D. Talbot-Rice addressed to D. Howard dated 10.II.1944, PRO-FO/371. File No. 43549.

of the British aristocracy to send their sons into the ranks of the Secret Service. The favourite sphere to make a career has been that of politics and diplomacy. Amery's case was somewhat singular.

They told us there of the «tragedy» that happened to his family, which placed in jeopardy the position it occupied in «high society». Generation after generation, the Amerys had been on the most extreme right in the political life of the country: with the Tories in the 19th century, with their successors, the Conservatives in our century. The father of Julian, Leo Amery, especially, had done the Empire great services: had been first lord of the Admiralty immediately after the First World War and then Secretary of State for India.¹ Apparently making too broad an interpretation of the family traditions of resistance to the progressive ideas with which the 20th century was seething, an elder brother of Julian's went so far as to join Molsey's group of the fascists in England in the 30's. The affair would have been passed off as «youthful folly» if the brother

¹ In his last book «Approach March» J. Amery states proudly that his family was small and «he could count his cousins on his fingers», while «its imperial connections were many». Leo Amery had travelled all over Britain's colonial possessions and he must have displayed excessive zeal in this work, if, as we learn from his son, it earned him a reprimand even from Winston Churchill, who was a personal friend, that he (Leo Amery) «seemed to think that the British Empire was his private property». J. Amery agrees proudly that «there was a grain of truth in this criticism» and explains that «the unity and strength of the Commonwealth and the Empire were the central themes of my father's life». «Approach March» p. 44.

had not committed a real act of treason, when at the outbreak of the war, he fled to Hitlerite Germany and placed himself openly in its service by speaking from Radio Berlin in the English language broadcasts. This created such an impression on opinion within the country that after the end of the war it was impossible to placate the popular indignation except by capturing the culprit, who was tried for high treason and hanged.

Naturally such a stain on the «good name» of the Amerys could not be washed off simply by denying the «worthless son». Thus it was up to Julian to restore the family honour by taking part in a few war actions of «unusual danger» that had to prove the constant loyalty of the Amerys to the «Crown» and the Empire. A mission to the «savage mountains» of Albania, the name of which was always shrouded in deep mystery, was a fine opportunity, all the more so since the danger was connected more with lack of familiarity with the country rather than with the mission itself. Afterwards, J. Amery was not to pride himself because he returned triumphant, but as it seems, «he has no reason to be dissatisfied over Albania», because the doors to his career were opened wide after the war and he several times succeeded in becoming a minister of the Conservative cabinets, first of Harold Macmillan (his father-in-law) and, later of Edward Heath, Britain's last Conservative Prime Minister¹.

¹ At the last Conservative cabinet which was in power up till the summer of 1973, J. Amery had attained the post of «Secretary of State» at the Foreign Office, which corresponds to first Deputy Secretary of Foreign Affairs.

After intensive training in parachute landings and almost ritual instructions, J. Amery also was ready to depart. In the latter half of April, the three: McLean, Amery and Smiley, landed in Northern Albania, which was the immediate objective of the mission, and established themselves with Abaz Kupa, who constituted the «bridge» over which the British policy wanted to step into the Albanian situation at that time¹.

The developments in the external political and military situation were in contrast. On the one hand, it was hoped that the invasion of Southern Italy by the Anglo-American troops might give heart to any political action in the Adriatic zone. That is why, in the spring of 1944, a «special office» was established in Bari directly dependent on the resident Minister Resmin, attached to the staff of the Allied Forces in Algiers, which was the highest political instance, with the task of dealing with the problems that emerged from the progress of the military operations in the Mediterranean zone. On the other hand, the appearance of Soviet troops on the northern threshold of the Balkans threatened to cancel out this «favourable situation».

Both these factors, however contradictory, impelled the British to make haste in applying their policy. However the co-ordination of these factors to some degree determined that dearth of ideas, that excessive trepidation from which Great Britain's Balkan policy was never free to the end.

What was the situation that McLean found when

1 See J. Amery «Sons of the Eagle», pp. 72-75.

he landed for the second time? The position of the reactionaries was becoming hopeless. The stream of reports from Albania was saying that «Balli Kombëtar» «have become purely government militia. Their name as collaborationists is too well known for existence as a coherent party.»¹

Bazi i Canës remained ever more firmly fixed in his refusal to come out on the field of battle. Before McLean and Amery were attached to him, in a meeting with Major Seymour at the beginning of April, he had said that «he will take no action until the Allies recognise King Zog and allow a government under him to be formed outside Albania...» If they (the Allies) would not agree to this, he (Bazi) «intends to do nothing more than offer safety to the Allied Missions» that came to him. In his report, Seymour had expressed the opinion that «such a policy is only a pretext not to fight at all» and that «Kupa's real aim is to remain militarily inactive and obtain full power for a coup-d'état when the Germans leave.»²

After their arrival in the country, McLean and Amery were compelled to make a reassessment, a fresh evaluation of «Legality», even although this might be contrary to the judgements that had been given long before in the «memorandum on Albania».

1 Telegram from Cairo for the Foreign Office dated 12.IV.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43561. McLean, too, was to report this later when he arrived there. See telegram of the Bari office for Albania dated 6.VI.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43551.

2 Tel. from Cairo for Foreign Office dated 7.IV.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43550.

At the beginning of May, on the basis of their reports, the head of the Bari «office» Broad, wrote to his superior Harold Macmillan «the resident Minister» in Algiers (Prime Minister in the 60's) that «the pro-Zog movement organised by Major Abaz Kupa is less advanced than was originally believed.

«It now appears that Major Kupa's party consists mainly of former officials of the Zog's regime who were not given employment by the Italians, and of those members of the Albanian gendarmerie, together with a number of Army officers, who escaped to Yugoslavia with Major Kupa in 1939.»¹

In the following days the reports were to give a gloomier picture. At the beginning of June, in the telegraphic communications that the Bari office for Albania sent regularly, such admissions as the following can be read: «The Legality Movement is immature and not supported by the country. The armed forces of the Zogist party are not yet a military factor.»²

«The force Kupa controls was originally thought to be between ten and twenty thousand but now reported approximately only five thousand, mainly Italians poorly armed and equipped.

«Large amounts of supplies and money necessary before any worth-while action against the Germans possible.

«Kupa's attempts over five months to build a political and military party have failed.

1 Note of Philip Broad to H. Macmillan dated 11.V.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43551.

2 Copy of telegram of the Bari office for Albania dated 6.VI.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43551.

«Kupa's Committee is composed of representatives of no political import.

«Kupa's influence is local... Many contacts proved collaborating with quisling Government.»¹

As for the National Liberation Movement, Major Palmer, who had taken Davies' place as head of the mission, had long since reported on the now irresistible drive of the «revival» of the partisan forces...² According to British estimates, at the end of the winter the partisans amounted to about 20 thousand men well armed and equipped, and «as in the past proved to be the only party fighting the Germans.»³ Later, in May, Major Palmer together with Major Leake, who had come for a short time «to inspect the activities of the BLO on the spot», report what apparently comes as an even greater shock to the British, that «the partisans are now enjoying a sense of power and have elected government leaders».⁴ Obviously this was in reference to the Congress of Përmet. From the end of June the information was to be a little more complete: «L.N.Ç. Congress held at Përmet at the end of May has elected a Provisional Government...

«King Zog is forbidden to return until a popular vote can be organised.

«New administration desire military recognition

1 Copy of tel. from Bari office for Albania dated 7.VI.1944.

2 See letter of E. Boxshall addressed to E. Rose dated 12.IV.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43550.

3 See copy of telegram above from Bari office for Albania dated 7.VI.1944.

4 See copy of tel. above from Bari office for Albania dated 6.VI.1944.

from Allies, an exchange of military representatives and increased military support. It urges that Allied missions now working with discredited political parties should be withdrawn. Additional missions from the United States and Russia are requested.»¹

After staying two weeks in Southern Albania, Major Leake, was to report: «Unfortunately, the National Liberation Movement have the whiphand.»

Here and there voices are heard from officers operating in Albania that are not in unison with the official policy. Special mention should be made of a report by Lieutenant-Colonel Wheeler,² which sounds like a clear condemnation of the stand that has been and is still being maintained towards the National Liberation Movement and the traitor organizations of our country. After spending the winter with the partisan forces, after he himself had seen their sufferings and sacrifices, their fighting and bravery at first hand, Wheeler evidently does not find it easy to violate his conscience and concoct things. Indeed he takes the courage to attack some of the main theses that serve as a basis for the hostile policy towards the National Liberation Movement.

In his report Wheeler states: «The primary aim of the L.N.Ç. is to rid the country of the Germans. It has been suggested that this is a ruse on their part to obtain further aid from the Allies. The Nation that will go barefoot in the snow, have its homes

¹ Telegram of P. Browd from Bari dated 26.VI.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43551.

² Extract from report of Lieutenant-Colonel Wheeler, without date, but it is evident that it pertains to June or July 1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43551.

burned and pillaged, and starve in the mountains as a means of deception deserves to succeed. Partisan military successes in Albania have not and cannot, by virtue of the nature of the Country, be as spectacular as elsewhere, but there can be no doubt that the Partisans are waging active war against the Germans.

«It has been proved beyond any shadow of doubt that the Tirana Government and Balkom are collaborating actively with the Germans, and the rest the 'Legality', by sitting on the fence, are collaborating passively. It can be appreciated, therefore, that it is exceedingly difficult to explain to the Partisans the reason why the Allies not only do *not* denounce these collaborators but give them supplies where it was the principle that mattered not quality) and continue to maintain Military Missions with them. I am assured that Missions must be maintained for Intelligence purposes, but surely that is a task for an agent than a soldier.»

Then Wheeler concludes with these words: «During the past six months, together with Major Tilman and Palmer, I have asked for a change in policy and submitted recommendations accordingly. The position has remained unaltered. Major Leake has spent *two weeks* in the country and submits almost identical views expressing the opinion that *unfortunately* the L.N.Ç. have the whiphand... But why *unfortunately*? I am a professional soldier not a politician, but from what I have seen of the L.N.Ç. they are perfectly capable of running Albania, and to the satisfaction of the populace. The L.N.Ç. Party is extremely well organised

and, considering the lack of communication in the country, well controlled. It would appear, therefore, that Major Leake also considers that some measures of condemnation be extended to the collaborators.» ... whereas he confines himself to speaking ill of the National Liberation Movement.¹ Needless to say, Wheeler did not make a good impression with such a report. In the S.O.E, they immediately described him as a «very pro-partisan» element.²

In general outline the development of events in Albania emerges very clearly from the British documents. There is an abundance of full reports. They can no longer complain in London that they do not have accurate information: it is known which forces are fighting and which are collaborating. However all these facts are kept in deep secrecy. The relevant documents are all stamped «top secret». In their public statements the top British officials pretend not to know about them.

As has been stated above, at the end of January 1944 they decided to denounce the Regency and the quisling government.³ About the «Balli Kombëtar»

¹ *Ibid.*

² E. Barker, op. cit. p. 180.

³ But not without some hesitancy even on this. At the beginning of March, Mehdi Frashëri, one of the four members of the Regency, set up by the Germans, sent his son Rakip to Istanbul with a «secret message» for President İnönü, «requesting Turkish patronage enable her participate post-war international conferences on Balkans, especially concerning federation». A second message was for the Allies and declared that «Stated Government opposed to Germans but unable to expel them and unwilling involve country in further sacrifices until Allied landing, Mehdi constant touch

and «Legality», not a word was said. A series of directives compiled by the PWE during the period January-June 1944, especially for the BBC broadcasts, explicitly ruled out «to denounce individually by name any individual (no matter to what Party or organisation they may belong, but without mentioning such Party) who are proved to have flagrantly collaborated with the Germans.»¹

During the second half of May two more statements, of the highest level, were made in the House of Commons one after the other (May 23 and 24). In one, Deputy Prime Minister Atlee «outlined the character of three political organizations in Albania». He put the National Liberation Movement in first place as the «most active in resistance», but did not forget either the «Balli Kombëtar» («which is not very stable from the organizational standpoint») or «Legality» («supporters of King Zog»).² The next day, Prime Minister Churchill, in a speech on the foreign policy made

with Abaz Kupi and entire country would support Allied Forces.» On this occasion, too, the British showed that they did not disdain links with the quisling government: their agents in Istanbul received instructions from Cairo «to pass a message back to Mehdi Frashëri to the effect that a British liaison officer conservant with Albanian matters would shortly be sent to Albania. Mehdi Frashëri would be at liberty to communicate with this officer through Kupi». (Letter of E. Boxshall addressed to E. M. Rose dated 15.III.1944, together with the copy of the telegram from Istanbul on Rakip Frashëri's «mission». PRO-FO/371. File N° 43550.)

¹ PRO-FO/371. File N° 43561.

² Copy of Hulbert's question and Atlee's reply in the House of Commons dated 23.V.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N° 43563.

a passing allusion to the movement in our country, preferring the equivocal metaphor: «Albania has a bold bid for freedom.»¹

Hence, in London they knew very well how things stood, but they did not want to change their policy. Once again greatly overrating their forces and possibilities, even now the British did not give up their original objective of upsetting the ratio of forces in Albania and bringing the situation within the country into line with the political interests of Britain. If the efforts hitherto had not yielded any results, it was up to McLean and Amery to make a final attempt to succeed, with the hope that this would be the «best time».

Thus McLean and Amery commenced an inglorious odyssey, an odyssey that was going to take them into the odious swamps and gloomy dens of reaction and treason. For months on end, from April to November, they and other officers «in His Majesty's Service» roamed all over Northern Albania, which was still in enemy hand, in essence tolerated by the enemy, to gather together bajraktars, brigands, mercenaries, politicians and agents, to build with the dregs, that the centuries had deposited in our society, a barricade that was needed to halt the mighty torrent of what even they saw was a profound revolution.

The plan of action had been outlined in the «memorandum» that McLean had drawn up himself. The pivot of this plan, as we have seen, was Bazi i Canës.

¹ According to the directive of PWE about Albania dated 1.VI.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43561.

First of all, he had to become the force to attract all the «rightist nationalist» elements. This was the easiest point: it was immediately obvious that the danger that the British plan would come to grief, did not lie here. Thus many Ballists became Zogists. The heads of the «Balli», the Regency and the quisling government were going and coming to Bazi for «certificates of patriotism», and «loyalty to the Allied cause». «The alliance» of all the Albanian reaction on which the British were so insistent, might be knocked together in a «second edition».

The second point was «reconciliation» with the National Liberation Movement. This was an entirely different matter. From the whole stand of the National Liberation Movement it could be gathered that it was useless to knock on that door. Furthermore, Comrade Enver Hoxha, in his speech at the Congress of Përmet dealt Bazi i Canës and «Legality» a severe blow, precisely because it had not escaped the eye of the National Liberation Movement that it was intended to make them the «rallying point for all the reactionary forces»... «'Legality' assumes the same position as the 'Balli Kombëtar'; Bazi i Canës is a traitor, too,» said Comrade Enver Hoxha at the Congress.¹ Besides that, Comrade Enver Hoxha also openly denounced the fact that McLean's mission remained with Bazi and demanded its immediate withdrawal. «No British mission should stay any longer with the traitorous elements of our people,» said Comrade Enver Hoxha, interpreting the sense of

¹ Enver Hoxha, Works, vol. 2, p. 213-214 (Alb. ed.).

outrage of an entire people who were shedding blood in the Anti-fascist War.¹

Under these conditions, when there was no breach to be seen in the wall of the NLM, the third point was of great importance to the British plan: the involvement of A. Kupa in «anti-German military actions». Here we would like to say that the British documents reflect a certain tendency to paint matters in rosy colours, to distinguish at all costs in the «waiting attitude» of the bajraktar of Kruja motives of a «subtle diplomacy» and of a «great policy». But, in fact, Seymour was right when he said that Bazi was using this «policy as an excuse not to fight at all.» The whole thing was that in telling him to fight, they were demanding the impossible of him. We do not know whether McLean and the others with him ever understood this, but to fight against the Germans was beyond Bazi's desire and real possibilities. The reason is very simple: he did not have anyone with whom to do it; he had only dead souls, as in Gogol's famous novel. Even in the district he called «his own» he was like that tree that has its roots on the surface. To terrorize defenceless people, to oppress and exploit the unfortunate peasants, for meaningless «alliances» in the mountains, of course, half a dozen brigands backing him up could do the job, particularly when this occurred under the tolerant eye of the occupation authorities and the quislings. But as fighting against the Germans, Bazi did not dare. As Comrade Enver Hoxha says in an article of November 1944, «Abaz Kupa nei-

ther kept his word, nor used his rifle; he was always the sinister man of perpetual treachery.»¹

Thus, when McLean and Amery called on him once again to fight, pointing out to him the danger that he would be left outside the flow of events, Bazi did not refuse, but demanded that they drop him many tons of arms and supplies, not to mention large sums of money, by parachute. McLean and Amery tried to convince him that, first, he had to undertake at least some sort of action, such as blowing up a bridge or damaging a highway, so that they (the British) could justify the aid in the eyes of the National Liberation Movement and the Allied powers. Bazi said, «Either stage a general uprising or better wait.»²

Evidently determined to save his plan at all costs, McLean then devised an original «theory» on the specific nature of the nationalist uprising. He expressed this in a message of his sent towards the end of June.³ The essence of this theory can be summed up in these few words. The nationalist uprising is not the same as the communist uprising. The nationalists, «who represent the existing social order», cannot undertake isolated actions «in so far as they adequately protect their society against enemy reprisals». In contrast with the Nationalists, «L.N.C. leaders do not base their power on existing social order but rather on its dissolution...», therefore they

1 Enver Hoxha, Works, vol. 2, p. 394 (Alb. ed.).

2 See telegram of P. Browd from Bari in the first half of June 1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43551.

3 Message of L/Colonel McLean from Albania dated 26.VI.1944, PRO-FO/371 N°. 43551.

1 Enver Hoxha, Works, vol. 2, p. 224 (Alb. ed.).

are not afraid of the occupiers' punitive expeditions. In conformity with this, according to McLean, the development of the «revolution» is different too: «In contrast to the L.N.C. revolution which has grown into a general rising in part by small-scale actions, the Nationalist insurrection begins near its peak and if unsuccessful declines into guerrilla and eventual passivity.»

It goes without saying that McLean needed this reasoning to arrive at the conclusions that, «When it is a question of a nationalist uprising, we must not be too rigid in carrying out the principle: first the action, then the supplies.» In other words, the centre was asked to begin immediately sending large quantities of supplies to Bazi, even though he might remain idle waiting for the «appropriate moment» to go into action. And if we bear in mind that the «appropriate moment» was the landing of the Allied troops, then it is clear that the whole purpose was to arm the local reactionary forces so they would be ready to seize power. McLean concluded by saying that «unless there is Nationalist insurrection and the Nationalists derive its consequent moral and material advantages they will stand little chance of preventing the L.N.C. from seizing power...»¹

¹ *Ibid.*

WILSON'S ULTIMATUM

In order to emphasize the importance that he attached to the problem, McLean demanded that it be brought before the Foreign Secretary Eden. Here he used the right that Eden himself had given him, at his last meeting in London, that «on matters of particular political importance» he could communicate with Eden personally, although through S.O.E. The matter was discussed in Bari, in Algiers where Macmillan still had his residence, and in London — at joint meetings of representatives from the Foreign Office and S.O.E.¹ then also at the High Command of the Anglo-American Allied Mediterranean forces. At this time one cannot help noticing that in this zone the United States was showing up alongside Britain ever more frequently. Although the British policy was still to retain the primary role for a time, the general activation of American policy was making itself more and more apparent in the Medi-

¹ See especially an extract from the minutes of the joint committee F. Office — S.O.E dated 13.VI.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43563.

terranean and in regard to Albania. Thus, henceforth the actions and stands towards the National Liberation Movement, «Legality» and the «Balli» appear as expressions of a policy more or less concorded between the USA and Britain. It is not by accident that, even for the problem raised by McLean, it was the Allied Mediterranean High Command that finally tipped the balance.

McLean's plan was not accepted because it was considered impracticable. In his message, McLean asked that a decision be made quickly; there was no time to wait. After having completed the liberation of the South, the partisan forces were preparing to advance to the North and this boded ill for Abaz Kupa and company. However this imminent prospect did not leave much room to manoeuvre. The National Liberation Movement had already become a first-rate *military factor*. It is no exaggeration to say that they not only took this into account but were also afraid of it. But let McLean testify once again. In a first telegram that he sent to Eden at the end of May, McLean again asked (with all possible seriousness) for Zog's famous letter for Abaz Kupa, which, as we recall, he had not received when he left. At the same time he recommended «as essential» that «the utmost secrecy be maintained» lest the National Liberation Movement should get wind of it and undertake some counteraction that would fall on the head of A. Kupa,¹ first of all.

1 This time, the Foreign Office was to refer the question of Zog's letter to A. Kupa for examination by the Chiefs of Staff Committee, an organ of the War Cabinet, asking for a

A telegram from Browd in Bari is even more significant. After he stressed that «L.N.Ç. are the only party in Albania at present offering any active resistance to the Germans,» the head of the «Albanian office» added the following: «There are signs that enemy activity in their area is about to increase. According to reports received from British Liaison Officers in L.N.Ç. area, Partisans are becoming increasingly mistrustful to our present policy towards Kupa and there is a risk that their activities in the general Allied interest may be prejudiced unless they are convinced that our assistance in Albania is confined to those who are prepared to fight. They distrust our connexion with Kupa and suspect that we have designs of forcing the return of King Zog.»¹ For this reason the «middle road» was again considered more appropriate.

Even now that he had not responded to the appeal of McLean and Amery to undertake some fighting action, Bazi i Canës still could not be neglected. At the middle and end of June, D. Laskey stressed that «with Kupa ...there may be some more powerful political long-term advantages» apart from

judgement on «the importance of Albania from the operational viewpoint», before proceeding on the course of encouraging «the latent forces of the Albanian resistance». The matter was then handed on to the High Command of the Allied Mediterranean forces (letter of O. Sargent to the secretary of the Chiefs of Staff Committee dated 3.VI.1944, together with the copy of McLean's telegram PRO-FO/371. File N° 43555, and telegram to the Allied Mediterranean High Command, dated 8.VI.1944. PRO-FO/371. File N° 43551:).

1 Tel. of P. Browd from Bari for Algiers dated 10.VI.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N° 43563.

those of a military nature of short-term importance, because «it is very doubtful whether a purely L.N.Ç. regime in Albania after the war would be the most satisfactory...» for Great Britain.¹ On the other hand, it was the NLM, and this was the only real force, that was increasingly imposing itself on the Albanian situation, regardless of the fact that it was looked upon as a potential enemy of the Western powers.

Therefore the Allied High Command decided (and the Foreign Office agreed) that the efforts for «reconciliation» between the National Liberation Movement and «Legality» should be continued, always under the slogan of the «need to prevent any immediate outbreak of civil war» and the «priority of the interests of the war against nazism.» In conformity with this, proposals were made about a meeting of representatives of the «two rival parties» somewhere in Central Albania in the presence of the British officers. Then it was suggested that the representatives of the parties should be taken out of Albania, brought to Bari and there «under the patronage of the Allied authorities» should work out an agreement on co-operation.²

If we bear in mind that this is the time when the British plan of action in connection with Greece to trap the EAM (the National Liberation Movement in Greece) precisely through «reconci-

¹ See two notations of D.S. Laskey dated 15.VI.1944 and 27.VI.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N° 43563.

² Tel. of. Foreign Office for Macmillan (Resmin-Algiers) dated 4.VII.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N° 43566. See also tel. of P. Browd to Algiers dated 5.VII.1944. *Ibid.*

liation» with the reactionaries (which was to be materialized in the notorious Varkisa agreement of February 1945), began to mature, a parallel automatically comes to mind when mention is made of the tactic that the British decided on in connection with the development of the situation in our country.

As for Bazi i Canës, as could have been foreseen, he was ready «to forget the past». In the first days of July, Browd reported from Bari this «belated repentance», in which as he admitted himself, «no doubt Providence has played its own part». Bazi, who could not do without «the hand of a protector» laid down as a sole condition that he «is willing to meet L.N.Ç. under our auspices and provided that British Liaison Officers conduct negotiations».¹

However the National Liberation Movement did not fall into the trap that had catastrophic effects for the National Liberation Movement in Greece. At the end of June, the 1st Division crossed the Shkumbin River and with it the «Ribucon» that the Mediterranean Allies had set as the limit of «its sphere of influence and action». In the first half of July, the operation of the partisan brigades for clearing Northern Albania of the forces of the enemy and the traitor organizations was in full swing. The first reports said that the resistance which the partisan detachments encountered in Northern Albania was «surprisingly weak». The British officers did not fail to make some direct approaches to these active forces, by inviting both parties to send three delegates

¹ Tel. of P. Browd for Algiers dated 6.VII.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N° 43566.

for discussion to Bari.¹ «President of L.N.Ç. (Hoxha) considers First Division cannot be stopped... L.N.Ç. have waited too long for Kupa to fight and that the latter is now barring L.N.Ç's way to the north as he did last February.»² On the other hand, «L.N.Ç. Command of First Division has taken up completely intransigent attitude and is determined to fight Kupa as a traitor.»³

Then came the time for the famous «ultimatum» of General Wilson, Commander of the Allied Mediterranean High Command. First, Lieutenant-Colonel Palmer, attached to the General Staff of the NLA, had been called to Bari a week earlier and returned to Albania as quickly as possible with instructions to make another attempt at the bankrupt tactic of «conciliation» between the two opposing forces, in which as before, the British officers retained the role of «impartial arbitrators».⁴ Then, in a second phase, Palmer received orders to «contact General Enver Hoxha at the earliest opportunity» and demand «to prevent L.N.Ç. attacks on the forces of Major Abaz Kupa and encourage him to by-pass areas in which Kupa's supporters are situated.»⁵ Once again

1 Tel. of P. Browd for Algiers dated 5.VII.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43566.

2 Tel. of P. Browd for Algiers dated 6.V.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43566.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Directive in writing sent to Lieutenant-Colonel Palmer reported to Algiers by telegram dated 13.VII.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43551.

exaggerating the importance of «supplies», Wilson threatened that otherwise he would suspend them because «I cannot condone your use of... the arms... we send ... you for civil war,» and in contradiction to the strategic objectives of his command for the Balkans.¹

Despite a tone that clearly expresses that sense of superiority and intolerance which the British militarymen considered a natural tribute of the representatives of a «Great Empire», Wilson's «ultimatum» clearly contains the first elements of backing down by the British in their Albanian policy and especially in relation to the National Liberation Movement. In fact, up till then, the British had accepted neither the invitation to send a representative of theirs (Major Leake) to the Congress of Përmet nor the request formulated at this congress for the exchange of official military representatives between the National Liberation Movement and the Allied Mediterranean High Command. The British officers attached to our staff had received orders to respond with «a polite no». Now Wilson proposed that three representatives of the National Liberation Movement, «one of whom if possible be General Hoxha», should go to Italy for talks. Wilson had in mind another request of the Congress of Përmet when he instructed Palmer «to hint to General Hoxha that Allied Missions with Major Abaz Kupa will be withdrawn should Kupa not agree to fight the Germans.»²

1 Wilson's «message» contained in telegram dated 15.VII. 1944, that Bari sent to Algiers PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43555.

2 See directive and «message» mentioned above.

On July 12, Comrade Enver Hoxha gave his reply in which the favourite British thesis about the so-called civil war took a lashing. Comrade Enver Hoxha stressed from the outset that «There are no internal quarrels in Albania and even less a civil war. *There is only one quarrel and one war: war against the occupier, in the first place, and against its traitorous tools.*» Comrade Enver Hoxha concluded by pointing out that the partisan action in Northern Albania not only could not hinder, but was directly assisting the strategic objectives in the common fight against Hitlerite Germany.¹

After this we have another gesture of backing-down on the part of the British. On the proposal of the Bari office and with the approval of the Foreign Office, on July 14, the Director General of PWE sent the BBC a special directive about the Albanian broadcast of BBC to the effect that the «nationalist organization» known as the «Balli Kombëtar» should be described as a collaborationist organization and denounced as such.² Of course, this is more a question of some concessions more apparent than essential, especially in regard to the «Balli Kombëtar», which was now nothing more than a sinking ship.

However, it is now clear that the whole attitude of the Mediterranean High Command indicates a more advanced stage in the recognition of the National Liberation Movement, not only in the military plane but also on the political plane. The logic of the facts

¹ Enver Hoxha, Works, vol. 2, pp. 272-275 (Alb. ed.).

² Special directive of PWE for the Albanian broadcast of BBC dated 19.VII.1944. PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43561.

is irresistible, the fiction of the Albanian resistance divided into three component units can no longer be kept up, and even in the eyes of the «Allies» the resistance emerges as a single entity precisely through the National Liberation Movement. Proof of this can be seen in the talks that were held in Bari between a delegation of the General Staff of the NLA and representatives of the Mediterranean High Command in July-August 1944.

Remember that this was not the variant the British would have preferred in regard to talks. As we saw, their first proposal was that the NLM should send its representatives to Bari to sit down at the same table with the representatives of Abaz Kupi who would thus be recognized as «party to an agreement» that would have as its aim avoiding the so-called civil war.¹ However Major Shaw had not taken long to report from the staff of the NLA that General Hoxha answered that «under no circumstances would he accept to go such negotiations» and that the march of partizan forces towards the North «with or without further Allied aid».² Nor did the recommendation of the Foreign Office, that the threat that «the missions attached to the NLA be withdrawn» should be employed, give any more results.³

From this the British could gather how much weight their words carried. Now it was true that a delegation of the NLA was going to Bari, but it was

¹ See copy of telegram (in 5 points) from Bari dated 5.VII.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43566.

² *Ibid.*

³ Copy of telegram for Bari dated 5.VII.1944. *Ibid.*

going «to co-ordinate their operations with the Allied High Command», just as Comrade Enver Hoxha had presented the matter in his reply of July 12 to General Wilson. «In order to clear up every question and to put the Mediterranean High Command more in touch, as well as to talk in detail about the co-ordination of our actions with those of the Allies, we have frequently sought to send our delegates to Italy in order to reach an understanding on more organized co-operation against the German occupiers. Our requests have had not result whatsoever. Once again we make the request that our delegates be sent to this High Command, which seems to us essential; we hope that this time the Mediterranean High Command will not refuse our request.»¹ And in fact, «this time» the request was not refused, although this, too, was for tactical reasons, because the plans linked with A. Kupa and reaction in the North had not been abandoned even now, as we shall see.

Nevertheless the Bari talks were undoubtedly of political significance. We can say this all the more if we bear in mind that the talks ended with the conclusion of a formal agreement. The «major» political problems were carefully avoided by the «Allied» side. It agreed only to certain commitments to «send supplies by sea and air» to the partisan forces (and, even these were never fulfilled properly, as is admitted in the British documents which talk of «insufficient aircraft at their disposal» and «bad weather»). The written request presented by the delegation from our staff that the «Allies recognize the Anti-fascist National Liberation Committee as

¹ Enver Hoxha, Works, vol. 2, pp. 274-275 (Alb. ed.).

a Provisional Government for the duration of the war» was not accepted by the «Allied High Command»¹ who had received prior instructions from the Foreign Office «to make a polite but firm refusal».² At any rate, the conclusion of the agreement in itself was a step towards international recognition of the NLM, because, even according to the bourgeois-classical concept of justice, this fact in itself denotes «an indirect, tacit recognition» of the *situation de fait*.

There is also another fact that expresses this more advanced stage of recognition of the National Liberation Movement. Even in the British documents, especially after the Congress of Përmet, Comrade Enver Hoxha emerges as the central figure of all the Albanian events. For several successive years, the most difficult years of the war, it was essential that the movement work in deep illegality and the National Liberation Movement appeared, especially to the outside world, as somewhat «impersonal». Near the end of the war, with the Congress of Përmet, which marks the establishment of the new People's Democratic State of Albania, the leader of the Party, who is in fact the leader of the entire movement, is placed officially at the head of the Anti-fascist Committee (with the attributes of the Provisional Government) and the National Liberation Army. At that time, Comrade Enver Hoxha emerges as the top mi-

¹ Copy of decision of meeting of representatives of the NLA and those of the Mediterranean High Command dated 23.VIII.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43553.

² Telegram of Macmillan for Bari dated 12.VIII.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43551.

litary and political representative of the National Liberation Movement in the external relations as well. The «well-mannered» politicians hiding comfortably under the shadow of the more prominent lose their value and, willy-nilly, the British are obliged to deal with Albanian leaders and statesmen of a new type, raised in the soil of the people's war. Comrade Enver Hoxha becomes the main protagonist in the Albanian political scene. He and the «team of ministers with him in the mountains» give the appearance of an entirely different Albania, organized, militant, «astoundingly» proud and dignified.

That the National Liberation Movement found in Comrade Enver Hoxha an authentic representative, with a powerful personality which imposes respect even on his opponent, this, too, emerges from the testimony of their own writings, left by several of the British officers who were here during the war. Thus Davies describes him as «one who could drive ruthlessly», «full of charm and good spirits»,¹ Amery — as one «of rare organizing ability»,² Palmer — as «a highly intelligent man».³

1 Brigadier 'Trotsky' Davies «Illyrian Venture» pp. 76, 146.

2 J. Amery «Sons of the Eagle».

3 From speech of Colonel Palmer (Proceedings of a Conference on Britain and the European Resistance organized by St Anthony's College. Oxford Dec. 10-16, 1962).

A «SHARP TURN»

The speed with which the partisan forces were liberating the northern districts took the British no less by surprise. This explains why in July and August they still did not have the heart to recognize their defeat¹ and to abandon their double dealing. Not only did the National Liberation Movement not retreat under the Allied pressure but it also launched a counter-attack on the political plane. The delegation of the National Liberation Army Staff at Bari presented documented proof that showed A. Kupa's collaboration with the Germans. On this basis the official demand was made that, first, «Major Kupa and the 'Legality Movement' be denounced

1 This was how Amery himself later was to describe the failure of the mission in his book «Sons of the Eagle». «Defeat in victory» is the title he has given one of the chapters of the book. The «victory» is that against Germany, whereas the «defeat» that in the mountains of Albania.

as traitors to the Albanian people and the Allied 'cause'» and second, «the Allies withdraw their Missions from Abaz Kupi, Legality and other traitors»¹. In the first days of August Browd proposed to Macmillan (now in Caserta, Italy) that this demand be accepted.² Macmillan referred the matter to the Foreign Office, but towards the middle of August it gave a clear answer: «At this present juncture it would be most unwise to commit ourselves irrecoverably to the National Liberation Movement as against Kupi and for the moment there must be no question of withdrawing our B.L.O.s from the latter.»³

For their part McLean and Amery continued, almost from the force of habit, a «mission that long since failed». As if all the moves they had made for months on end were insufficient, they felt so strongly linked with the plan of reviving the Albanian reaction, that they did not want to go without one more try. Thus from the beginning of September, we see them roaming all over the North, in a desperate attempt to gather together what was left of the Ballists, Zogists, bajraktars, and even government figures, in order to create «a bloc of anti-National-Liberation nationalists» under the

1 On the insistence of the NLA delegation this demand was included as an addendum to the text of the Bari negotiations but remained without an answer there and then. See text of negotiations in PRO-FO/371. File N° 43553.

2 Tel. of F. Browd to Caserta dated 6.VIII.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N° 43566.

3 Tel. of Foreign Office addressed to H. Macmillan dated 6.VIII.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N° 43551.

leadership of A. Kupi. In the first week of September, McLean reported as a success the meeting he had with Mithat Frashëri and Abaz Ermeni, who had brought him the «unconditional» pledge of the «Balli Kombëtar» «...to take part in the war...», hoping that this would urge the allies to re-examine their stand of denunciation» that they had decided on a few weeks earlier. At the same time, he pointed out that «all the Nationalists are more anxious than ever to re-insure with the Allies», now that it was clear that the Germans were going to pull out of Albania.¹ Several days later McLean hastened to report «three minor actions in which Kupi forces were involved against the Germans... due to leadership of British Liaison Officers.» and on this basis he repeated the request «that supplies should be sent to Kupi.»² Only a few more days were to pass and he (McLean) was to give the «great news» that «a group of prominent nationalists representing several shades of political opinion have all declared against the Germans and taken to the mountains». Their names were: Mithat Frashëri, Prenk Previzi, Fiqri Dine, Hasan Dosti and Hysni Dema. Their aim was to get together in a «congress» in order to form a united bloc. As a preparatory step, on September 21 a meeting had been held with A. Kupi

1 Telegram of P. Browd to Caserta dated 14.IX.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N° 43553.

2 According to telegram of P. Browd for Resmin in Caserta dated 15.IX.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N° 43563.

and the heads of the «Balli Kombëtar» in the presence of McLean personally.¹

It is not difficult to derive from this that McLean and Amery wanted to reopen for discussion the question of the stand taken towards the traitor organizations and all the reactionary elements of our country. Naturally, such reports confused many minds in Bari, Caserta and up to the Foreign Office, the more so when it is known that it was not the desire that was lacking but only that it might be too late. And it must be said that it is not easy to follow the thread in the British documents of the summer months of 1944, which deal with the situation in Albania: there are contradictory views, continuous vacillations, equivocal attitudes, which speak of complete confusion.

It was precisely the desire to see more clearly through this confusion that impelled Churchill to turn to the Foreign Office at the end of July with a request: «Let me have a note on this showing which side we are on.»² In the report that Eden sent him some days later, he did not do much to clarify the situation but he assured the prime minister that «...the situation is being well handled in Bari, and I still have some hope that we may be able to reconcile the two factions».³

1 According to tel. of P. Browd for Resmin in Caserta dated 28.IX.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43563.

2 Note of Prime Minister Churchill (personal minute) for F. Office dated 19.VII.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43551.

3 Report of A. Eden for Prime Minister Churchill dated 23.VII.1944, *Ibid.*

Meanwhile, events were following their relentless course and a «sharp turn» was seen as indispensable to maintain a bridge to post-war Albania. In the middle of August Laskey wrote: «The chances of effecting an agreement between L.N.Ç. and the Nationalists are rapidly diminishing and it looks as though we shall soon have to disown the latter.» Laskey indicated that this solution was not entirely painless: «From the military point of view, this would be no great loss since L.N.Ç. are the only organisation which has ever done any serious fighting against the Germans... Politically, however, it is doubtful whether we want to assist L.N.Ç. to gain control over the whole of Albania.»¹

The feeling of «rivalry with Russia», also was disturbing the British. In August it found occasion to express itself again. In the first days of that month, precisely when our First Anti-fascist Youth Congress was being held in Helmës, a Soviet military mission arrived at the General Staff of the National Liberation Army in response to the request of the Congress of Përmet. Those taking part in the Youth Congress at Helmës, who welcomed the first representatives of the Soviet Union and Stalin to our country with great warmth, could not possibly have imagined that this fact, so simple in itself, would become the cause of a top level diplomatic incident. Eden deemed it necessary to notify Prime Minister Churchill of the fact, and in a special report, that he sent him towards the middle of August, he wrote

1 Note of D.S. Laskey dated 11.VIII.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43551.

with undisguised anger: «...The sending of this mission to Albania... smells of Russian efforts to communise the Balkans under our noses». He also reported that, since he had not received an answer from the Soviet ambassador in London, he had now instructed the British Ambassador in Moscow, Sir A. Clark-Kerr, «to take the matter up personally with Molotov and to seek explanation also of reasons for dispatch of Soviet mission to Albania».¹ When the ambassador reported from Moscow that Molotov had given no explanation, now Churchill told the Foreign Office that he did not consider it necessary to take any further steps himself.²

However, all this is sufficient to show that the problem of a new decision in connection with the development of the situation inside Albania, was becoming particularly acute. First of all, the matter was subjected to examination in the Political Committee of the «Balkan Air Force» attached to the Allied Mediterranean High Command. At a special meeting in the middle of September, that Committee expressed the opinion that «the recent proposal of Lieutenant-Colonel McLean to supply Abaz Kupa and the other nationalists with war material,» should not be accepted. The Committee put military considerations first, in support of its decision: «At a time when Partisan assistance is likely to be most useful against the Germans who show every indication of being

1 Report of A. Eden for Prime Minister Churchill and the accompanying letter of P. Dixon dated 16.VIII.1944, PRO-FO/371, File N°. 43551.

2 Note of Prime Minister Churchill in an accompanying letter of P. Dixon. *Ibid.*

driven to use evacuation routes through Albania, our relations with the Partisans would be prejudiced to our military disadvantage should we supply Kupa or other Nationalists...» On this basis the meeting came to the conclusion, «...Lieutenant-Colonel McLean was to be instructed to return to Italy and he was to inform Kupa that he was being withdrawn to report on the present situation in northern Albania.»¹

Then the problem was discussed, several days later (September 19), at another meeting that was held at the Foreign Office under the chairmanship of O. Sargent and with the participation of representatives of the War Office, S.O.E and M.I.6 (a branch of Military Secret Service). As can be seen from a report that was prepared for Eden and bears the signature of O. Sargent an analysis was made there of the internal and external factors: «In the event of an early German withdrawal, it seems inevitable that F.N.Ç. will gain control of the whole of Albania since the Nationalists and Kupa are in no position to offer serious opposition to them. It may be expected that the Communist leaders of F.N.Ç. will look to Russia rather than to this country...» After pointing out that all the British attempts «to bring about an agreement between Kupa and F.N.Ç...» had failed and that «there is no longer any prospect of their being successful» the meeting was obliged to observe that «there is no alternative to accepting the

1 Copy of decision of Political Committee the BAF (Balkan Air Force) dated 14.IX.1944, PRO-FO/371, File N°. 43555.

prospect of an F.N.Ç. Government in Albania after the war».¹

On the basis of all this, the meeting arrived at the conclusion that there had to be a change of policy (or more precisely of tactics) on the Albanian question: «Our policy should be to accept the probability of F.N.Ç. emerging as the dominant force in Albania after the war and to attempt to strengthen our influence with them.»²

The meeting also proposed the relevant measures to this end. First, «The remainder of the British mission with Kupa should be withdrawn.» However care must be taken that «This should not take place too quickly since Enver Hoxha, the leader of F.N.Ç. has recently demanded their withdrawal and precipitate action might be interpreted as a sign of weakness». Second, attempts should have to be made «in order to draw F.N.Ç. into the British orbit,» and to this end «General Wilson might summon Enver Hoxha for discussions in Italy». This was also regarded as an opportunity to exert new political pressures on the leadership of National Liberation Front and not simply as a step that must lead to find an unreserved recognition of the «National Liberation Front Government». In connection with this, the meeting expressed the opinion that «the discussions (with Enver Hoxha) would be on military matters and politics would be avoided since there is no need at this stage for us to recognise F.N.Ç. as a provi-

1 See report of Southern Department signed by O. Sargent dated 26.IX.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43555.

2 *Ibid.*

sional government. At the same time General Wilson would make it clear to Hoxha that we will not allow civil war in Albania and that our support will cease if F.N.Ç. are responsible for its outbreak».¹

Here the meeting formulated another threat that was to put in doubt the principle of Albanian independence when it recommended that «General Wilson might also point out (to E. Hoxha) that we shall be unable at the Peace Settlement to give practical effect to our promise to recognize Albanian independence if civil war is raging. F.N.Ç. could therefore be urged to form a united front with all Albanian parties,»² that the British had all along striven to bring to life.

There is no doubt this also was a last desperate attempt to «salvage what could be salvaged» of the Albanian reaction. Of course, in order to retain all possible «reserve means» for the future British policy in Albania, the above-mentioned meeting did not overlook the «question of king Zog». All agreed that «...if it appeared that His Majesty's Government were sponsoring his journey, this would nullify the effect of the measures described in the preceding paragraph to strengthen our influence with the F.N.Ç.

«King Zog himself has recently expressed a desire to go back to Albania, but it was agreed that we should give him no encouragement.

«It is always possible, however, that F.N.Ç. will fail to establish a stable government in Albania and

1 *Ibid.*

2 *Ibid.*

that they will sooner or later be overthrown. In that event, feeling in Albania might well swing round in favour of King Zog. From our point of view this would not necessarily be a disadvantage...» So the moral of the story emerged: «Even if we accept any F.N.C. Government we should therefore avoid becoming so deeply committed that our position in Albania would be weakened if ... King Zog returned.»¹

Having digested the content of Sargent's report, at the end of September Eden wrote the following marginal comment that expressed both anger and helplessness: «A tight rope for us to walk. But I can see nothing else that we can do.»²

This feeling of helplessness comes out clearly, also, in the report that Eden himself sent Churchill at the beginning of October.³ Eden considered it necessary to inform the prime minister directly that, «Now that the German evacuation of the Balkans is likely to take place at a not very distant date, it has become necessary to review the situation in Albania and the lines of our future policy». In essence nothing new comes out of the report, it simply repeats, point by point, what has been said above. It is worth setting apart that passage in which, after he admits the failure of the British attempts at «reconciliation», Eden describes the advance of the partisan forces to the North and says: «If the German withdrawal from Albania takes place in the near future, it is un-

¹ See report of Southern Department signed by O. Sargent dated 26.IX.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43555.

² Handwritten note of A. Eden on above report.

³ Report of A. Eden for Prime Minister Churchill dated 6.X.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43555.

likely that Kupa and the Nationalists or any other groups will be able effectively to oppose the F.N.C.'s undoubted aim of getting control of the whole country. Nor does there appear to be any way by which we could prevent this, since F.N.C. are now strong enough to dispense with our assistance if need be.»¹ Eden closed his report by saying that he had immediately telegraphed the main conclusions which had been reached at the Foreign Office «on the handling of the Albanian question» to the resident Minister Macmillan, in Caserta, together with the immediate steps that were considered indispensable in this situation.² The reference was to measures worked out at the September 19 meeting, that Eden had now adopted as his own: 1) The McLean-Amery mission should be withdrawn and, 2) E. Hoxha should be invited for talks in Italy.

Here begins a series of telegrams exchanged between Eden and Macmillan during the month of October. Macmillan's first reply, dated October 11, about the new light in which the problem emerges, is worth giving nearly in full. The resident minister wrote:

«1. I have now discussed this fully with General Wilson after obtaining Mr. Browd's views.

2. We agree that all members of British Mission with Kupa should be withdrawn. General Wilson is giving the necessary instructions. This is all the

¹ Report of A. Eden for Prime Minister Churchill dated 6.X.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43555.

² *Ibid.*

more desirable as there is a considerable risk of their falling into F.N.Ç. hands.

«3. General Wilson is quite prepared to summon Hoxha for discussion in Italy. The only military questions which can be raised between them consist of supply of arms and opening and control of ports. There might also be preliminary discussions on relief. But pretence will be rather thin, especially as F.N.Ç. delegates came to Bari to bargain for military talks only a few weeks ago. Moreover paragraph 3 (b) of your telegram under reference seems somewhat contradictory. You say discussions will not be on political matters and then say that General Wilson will make various observations about peace settlement in Albania, ... desirability of a united front between all parties. These no doubt are political matters.

«4. Therefore, before General Wilson takes steps to summon Hoxha, who we are informed could not arrive until towards the end of October, he would like clear instructions as to whether he is to raise or eschew these political matters. They will of course be raised by Hoxha himself.»¹

In his second telegram to Macmillan on October 13, Eden said that «the invitation to Hoxha should be based on the need for military discussions. This might well be extended to include relief questions... The invitation should not refer to political matters, since we do not wish to discuss recognition of the F.N.Ç. Provisional Government or to suggest to

¹ Tel. of H. Macmillan from Caserta addressed to the Foreign Office dated 11.X.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43556.

Hoxha that we are ready to do so.» General Wilson was required «... to state the view of H.M.G. on political points mentioned in paragraph 3 (b) (the united front of all the parties) of my telegram, but we do not wish General Wilson to go beyond these specific points.»¹ In other words, Eden thought that the talks could be carried out in this way: that the British side had the right to raise certain political matters (those it wanted), whereas the other side did not have this right.

On October 21 Macmillan replied that he and General Wilson considered Eden's proposition very difficult to achieve because «Pretext of military conversations... in the present strategic situation ... would be now so thin as to be quite transparent.» Another difficulty was the fact that General Wilson was an *Allied* commander and, if he entered into political conversations, he could commit the American Government, too, which would need to be consulted beforehand. However time would not wait.² Finally, Macmillan gave his own solution and proposed to implement what might be called «the diplomacy of hunger». In essence this is what he said: «My own view is that we should let F.N.Ç. come to us...» and not go to them. The country is ruined by the war, the people are suffering and hungry. «I suggest therefore that we should await Hoxha's inevitable request for civilian relief and should then say that this

¹ Tel. of Foreign Office to H. Macmillan dated 13.X.1944. *Ibid.*

² Tel. of H. Macmillan from Caserta addressed to the Foreign Office dated 21.X.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43556.

will be available we hope, but that if the country is disturbed by civil war, this will render equitable distribution, on which we insist, impossible and we are awaiting the emergence of a genuine national Government before embarking on it.»¹

However the development of events in Albania once again left no room for British hopes. At the second meeting of the Anti-fascist National Liberation Council, held in liberated Berat on October 20-23, as always, no hand was held out to beg for alms or mercy. On the contrary, Comrade Enver Hoxha presented the balance-sheet showing the complete and undivided victory of the National Liberation War. There, too, the Anti-fascist Committee was transformed into the Democratic Government of Albania. In its declaration on October 23, the Government made known that it would immediately seek full recognition from the Allied powers.²

The British policy in Albania went on vacillating between the reality of the victorious people's revolution and pipe dreams. On October 23, when he learned about the above-mentioned telegram from Macmillan, Laskey wrote: «Mr. Macmillan's arguments have much force and I think we may have to drop the proposal to get Hoxha to Italy.»³ On October 26, Eden informed Macmillan that he accepted the «theme of relief» as a main theme of

1 *Ibid.*

2 Documents of the supreme organs of the National Liberation revolutionary state power (1942-1944), Tirana 1962, Doc. N° 77, pp. 292-293.

3 Note of D.S. Laskey dated 23.10.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N° 43556.

future talks with the National Liberation Front and continued: «It is clearly unpalatable and tactically unwise to court the favours of F.N.Ç., but it is important that we should attempt to establish some degree of influence over them and I am not sure that we can risk waiting for them to come to us. Relief provides a suitable subject on which we might take the initiative and I think we should be able to make it serve our purpose.»¹

In the British documents at the end of 1944, there is a great deal of talk about the «re-examination of the Albanian question». But, as emerges from the many telegrams exchanged between Eden and Macmillan during October, this «re-examination» is reduced to two points: (1) withdrawal of McLean and abandonment of Abaz Kupa and (2) attempts to bring the National Liberation Front within the orbit of British policy. On the former, the least that can be said is that it came too late to be considered as even the slightest change in British policy. The British mission in the North, and right after it, Bazi i Canës, were withdrawn to Italy at the beginning of November, only when it became clear that they were going to fall into the hands of the partisan forces.²

1 Tel. of Foreign Office to H. Macmillan dated 26.X.1944. *Ibid.*

2 In order to withdraw Abaz Kupa, McLean addressed Eden, who ordered that «Kupa be withdrawn outside Albania, without making the slightest hint that His Majesty's Government has been involved in this operation.» According to E. Barker, in this case «they have thought to keep it secret to avoid trouble with General Hoxha». *Op. cit.*, p. 182.

In order to achieve the latter point — the political subjugation of the National Liberation Front — the British thought they held two powerful trump cards: besides «relief on population», another means of pressure was the recognition of the Democratic Government formed at Berat. In his last report in November, Laskey gave a certain forewarning of all the subsequent British attempts to make political gains from the question of recognizing our government: «...If we are prepared,» he said, «to grant early recognition, we should try to get something in exchange... We must therefore, try to extract some concessions... The most important of these is that F.N.Ç. should make itself a more or less representative government ... In addition to pressing F.N.Ç. to accept into their ranks such men as the Kryeziu brothers... we might also urge that a general amnesty should be granted...»¹

Later, the British were to make the rehabilitation of reactionaries and traitors in liberated Albania one of the main conditions in the protracted negotiations in connection with the recognition of the government. That they are determined to exploit this, as a kind of «retribution», can also be seen from the fact that, when the request for recognition of the government has only just reached them, they rushed to block it by intervening at the USA Government and even that of the USSR, calling on them not to grant recognition. Laskey wrote in the same report that «We have recently told the

¹ Report of D. S. Laskey entitled «Albania» dated 28.XI.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43556.

United States and Soviet Governments that we do not propose to recognize F.N.Ç. so long as the situation in Albania remains confused».¹

However the question of recognition of the Democratic Government is an extremely long drawn-out issue that could be the topic of a special study. Only its beginnings are reflected in the British do-

¹ Report of D.S. Laskey entitled «Albania» dated 28.XI.1944, PRO-FO/371. File N°. 43556.

From the documents of the Department of State of the USA, published after the war, it emerges that on November 3, the British Embassy in Washington sent the Department of State a special memorandum with the following content:

«As the Department of State should be also informed, Enver Hoxha issued a declaration on October 20, in Berat where he said that 'The First Albanian Democratic Government' has been formed by now, and they are going to request that the governments of the Soviet Union, USA, and Great Britain, as well as 'all the participants in the anti-fascist coalition' grant it full recognition. Under the current confused situation in Albania, His Majesty's Government is not going to recognize the Provisional Government the NLF created, and while taking the advantage of informing the Department of State on the views of His Majesty's Government, the British Embassy is instructed to express the hope that the USA Government will unite with it.»

On November 21, the Department of State sent a memorandum in reply, in which the British Embassy is informed that «they were going to refuse any request for the recognition of the Provisional Government founded in Berat». (Memorandum of the British Embassy in Washington, dated 3.XI.1944; and memorandum of the Department of State in reply, dated 21.XI.1944, Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic papers. Europe, vol. 3, Albania. Washington 1965).

cuments of the end of 1944. Its main development took place in 1945. The most important documents relating to it have long been in the hands of our side. However if the documents of the last year of the war (1945) are also made available like those of the other years, other undoubtedly valuable information will be added, and the research will be able to throw light on a new aspect of what went on behind the scene in British policy towards Albania.

Nevertheless even with what we now have at hand, it is more than clear that, as far as Albania is concerned, the British diplomacy had been pinned down in its movements. What occurred in our country shows how wide off the mark it was in its calculations! We need only mention that even now the officials of the Foreign Office could not refrain from expressing their nostalgia for «King Zog». Noteworthy in regard to this is a report by the American Ambassador in London (Winant) of September 19, 1944. This report is included in a number of documents on Albania which have been published in the documents of the Department of State of the USA, since the Second World War¹. In it Ambassador Winant informs the Secretary of State about the talk he had on Albania with «an official of the Foreign Office», that same day. The main theme of the talk was about Zog and the possibility of his returning to the throne of the kingdom, now that affairs

¹ Telegram of Ambassador Winant from London dated 19.IX.1944. Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers 1944. Europe, vol. 3, Albania. Washington 1965.

in Albania were taking a turn which pleased neither Britain nor America.

The Foreign Office official told him, «The possibility exists that the NLM will establish its control in the liberated Albania. Nevertheless, provided it (NLM) does not change its extreme-left tendencies, it is very probable that it will not manage to remain in power for a long time, for we believe that pro-communist feeling in Albania is low. If the NLM remains in its extreme-left position, a sort of a civil war will take place, and then Zog can manage to stage a come-back.»

«Whatever one might think or feel about Zog,» this official of the Foreign Office continued, «no doubt, he is the only suitable man, the only leader of quality who has emerged from the confused political scene of Albania, and at the same time, he is the head of a powerful clan and a man of the people.» Possibly this «far-sighted» official of the Foreign Office, mentioned by the American ambassador, was Laskey, because another document (of the British Foreign Office) shows that he expressed himself, almost word for word, in the same spirit, later. Thus Laskey, in his analysis of the situation in Albania at the end of November 1944, when the entire country had been liberated, considered it necessary to dwell especially on the problem of his (Zog's) «position» in order to express the desire and interest of Britain in his return!... but alas the NLF had won...

«Zog,» wrote Laskey, «would probably have been the best ruler of Albania both from Albania's point of view (sic!) as well as our own, but this is

now ruled out by the supremacy of F.N.C. There seems, therefore, no alternative to King Zog remaining in the background, though the possibility always exists that he will return to power if F.N.C. are overthrown.»¹ This is further evidence of the much boasted «realism» and «foresight» of the Foreign Office diplomats!...

Another matter which would need to be pursued and studied further is that connected with the landing of the British troops in summer-autumn of 1944, on our Southern coast, particularly at Saranda in September. In this direction essential documents are missing from those at our disposal at present. No doubt the main information is in the hands of the military organs. There were a number of secondary documents and indirect sources among the Foreign Office documents from which it emerges clearly that the idea of the use of force, in order to change the situation in favour of the forces of reaction and betrayal, according to the Greek model, was not ruled out in our case either. From the beginning, however, the British encountered stern opposition in our country. Hence their «commandos» were forced to withdraw in a hurry. There were very few documents that referred directly to this matter and even they did not contain much. Nevertheless an indication of the importance given to the operation in question is the fact that a number of other documents at the Foreign Office remain secret and here, too, the Archives tells us to wait until the year 2018.

¹ The above report of D.S. Laskey dated 28.XI.1944.

IN PLACE OF A CONCLUSION

At the end of this work we believe the readers will all agree that in spite of omissions, the documentary material of the British Foreign Office made available a few years ago, give us many new facts that complete our knowledge about British policy towards Albania and, in general, on the diplomatic history of the Albanian question during the Second World War. Of course many conclusions can be drawn. But in place of any conclusion let us go ahead to two or three years after the end of the war and arrive at February 1947.

At that time, an incident that had occurred to some British warships in the waters of the Corfu Channel in October 1946 came up for discussion in the Security Council of the UNO. After the liberation of our country, «His Majesty's fleet began sending its units more often to the waters of our Southern coast, showing itself once again as the most typical and traditional means of pressure in the arsenal of Britain's imperialist policy. That October, while

sailing close to Saranda, in combat formation, with their guns aimed towards us, a couple of warships struck mines and suffered damage in men and material. Over such an incident, that — logically speaking — should have been considered an aftermath of the war that had just ended, the British Government made accusations against our government. It inflated the issue to such an extent that it was introduced under article 7 of the UNO charter as a «threat to international peace and security», and the «complaint» was laid before the Security Council in January 1947.

In building up his case, the permanent representative of Great Britain in this organization, Alexander Cadogan, stressed, among other things, the «lack of humanity» of Albania, which, according to him, «had committed such a grave crime». At that time our country was not a member of the UNO because from the outset the Albanian candidature had encountered severe opposition from the USA and Britain. Therefore an Albanian delegation was invited to go to take part in the debates of the Security Council.

Perhaps Cadogan and others expected our delegation to sit «in the dock» bowed with remorse and beg for «leniency» from this «lofty forum». But, speaking in the name of our country, the head of the delegation Comrade Hysni Kapo, made a stern indictment of British policy towards Albania and towards the National Liberation Movement, in particular. He outlined all those hostile actions and attitudes that most clearly characterized this policy. He pointed out that even the story of the Corfu Channel incident, concocted so sensationally, was part of an

entire campaign intended to isolate people's Albania, as a punishment for the real «sin» of having dared to oppose the policy of Britain.

Cadogan immediately reacted very angrily. Here there is a fact we must take into account: that Cadogan was by no means a stranger to the British policy towards our country. Throughout the war he had been in the important post of Deputy Foreign Secretary and had taken a direct part in elaborating this policy. His signature appears on scores of documents that relate to Albania. Nevertheless he pretended to be hearing all that was said there about British policy towards Albania for the first time. Moreover in connection with this, assuming his usual disdainful pose, he declared that he had no intention of discussing these matters «either now or later.» Then, with «imperial» logic, Cadogan said that, if up till then he had any doubts about the «motives for Albania's behaviour», now he had gained unshakeable convictions about its «guilt». With an amazing violation of logic, he concluded his interjection with these words: «Every complaint, every dissatisfaction and every accusation formulated here by the Albanian representative merely proves our thesis...» Just as in the famous fable about the gluttonous wolf and the poor lamb... There is one difference however; the wolf lost his teeth whereas the flock found «its owner».

We mentioned this episode of relations between Britain and our country after the war here, because it seems to us that it illustrates very well all that «trauma» that «the mighty» experienced when they were brought face to face with the «revolt» of «the

humble» over whom they had trampled so shamelessly. On the other hand, it undoubtedly takes us to another subject of which we can be proud: to the historical movement of the small peoples for emancipation, in which our country occupies a worthy place.

For nearly 35 years our Party and State have followed an unwavering foreign policy based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism. During this whole historical period the People's Republic of Albania has shown that in its foreign policy it is not inspired by narrow nationalism, that it has as its guide the great ideals of socialism and communism — as great ideals of progressive humanity. On the other hand, our Republic has made it clear that it considers the principles of independence and complete equality as one of the foundations of its relations with other states, regardless of their size or «potential».

This has brought it high prestige, precisely as a state which, besides other things, has made its contribution to the irresistible historical process of the international recognition of the rights of small states in our time. In order to safeguard its interests and to express its views on the major problems facing the world today, the People's Republic of Albania has not hesitated to oppose both American imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism. For our Party and State the line of independence and equality is not something accidental, linked with this or that passing situation. It has its roots deep in our people's revolution and is one of its most important results.

In his speech to the electors on October 3, 1974,

Comrade Enver Hoxha formulated this principled stand of our Party and State in these words:

«The People's Republic of Albania maintains its own opinions on different matters and implements its constructive policy in an open way, in the light of the sun. It does not feel itself unconcerned by any problem and does not allow anyone to shut its mouth. Any state, any nation has a right to express its opinion freely, to oppose the opinion of others it does not agree with, just as the others have the same right to oppose the views they do not approve of. It is utterly erroneous to sit with folded arms and keep mum when the others act to the detriment of peoples and nations, or to nod approval to such actions, as some people would like us to do, pretending that it is sheer arrogance for small nations to try to have their say, to defend their or their friends' rights and come out with their opinions before the 'big ones'. False modesty and the slavish opportunist spirit are alien to the policy of the Albanian state and proletarian dictatorship.»¹

This passage not only expresses one of the most distinctive characteristics of the foreign policy of our socialist state, but it also captures the essence of one of the most important problems of the whole of international life in our time, the constructive development of which is not possible, except on the basis of rigorous respect for the principles of complete independence and equality.

1 Enver Hoxha, «Our Policy Is an Open Policy, the Policy of Proletarian Principles», Tirana 1974. p. 29 (Alb. ed.)

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